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Call for papers - Special Edition: Media Studies 2.0 - A Retrospective

MERJ invites submissions of full articles and research reports related to the claims and counterclaims surrounding the idea of Media Studies 2.0, first put forward in 2007 and the subject of debate and dissensus since.

Four years on, has media education been significantly transformed by Web 2.0? Is 'DIY media' competing with media coursework in schools, colleges and universities? Has the online age led to a new pedagogy for media education? How are teachers responding to an intake of 'prosumer' students? Or has the 'brave new world' of Media 2.0 failed to materialise?

We invite papers and reports that present the outcomes of media education research related to any aspect of this discussion. See the MERJ pages on the Auteur web site for guidelines for submission: http://tinyurl.com/yzbbygn or visit the new MERJ website, www.merj.info

New! MERJ website

www.merj.info features information about the current issue of the MERJ, including abstracts for every article, which will then build into an online archive. Every editorial will also be available to read online, together with **exclusive**, web-only content. Visit www.merj.info for contributor guidelines, deadlines for submissions and advance information about future issues.

Apologies for Cross Posting: A Keynote Exchange

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& Julian McDougall, Newman University College, Birmingham
Editors of the *Media Education Research Journal* (*MERJ*)

Fig. 1: wordle, Steve Dixon

This edition of *MERJ* publishes articles developed from research presented at two conferences in 2010. The Media Education Summit took place in September, convened by the Centre for Excellence in Media Practice and hosted by Birmingham City University with a contribution from Newman University College. The Media Literacy Conference was held in London in November, convened by the Media Education Association in association with the Centre for the Study of Children, Youth and Media at the Institute of Education, London University and in partnership with OFCOM. Cary Bazalgette, chair of the MEA, was a plenary panel member at the former and the main organiser of the latter. Keynote presentations came from Marc Prensky at the summit and from David Buckingham and Henry Jenkins at MLC.

MERJ was present at both conferences, running research seminars to support new researchers and inviting speakers to write up their research for our journal. In addition, we invited the four speakers above to contribute to this editorial in the form of a summary of their work – framed around key issues for media educators in 2011 – and an exchange of

views. What follows is a fascinating set of ideas – four summaries of research undertaken and the key emerging ideas that might inform our practice; followed by a dialogue – a discourse on 'participation' between Henry Jenkins and Cary Bazalgette. Similar themes are taken up in the 'review exchange' between David Gauntlett and readers of his new book which closes this edition and we will take these discussions further in our next edition – a themed issue on 'Media Studies 2.0 – a retrospective'. We hope readers of *MERJ* will find plenty here to challenge, inspire and provoke but – vitally – to inform our work with students in such testing times for the credibility of media education.

Speakers' corner

First up, we asked each participant to sum up their recent research and the ideas they presented at the conference.

David Buckingham:

My contributions to the conference were on two main themes. The first was to do with a report I was asked to lead for the UK government, about 'the impact of the commercial world on children's well being'. I chaired a panel of ten academic researchers, and we produced a substantial report that came out at the end of 2009.

This is a very polarised debate. On the one hand, many campaigners argue very strongly that the commercial world - by which they primarily mean advertising and marketing - is a bad influence on children in all sorts of ways. On the other, the marketers typically insist that they are very responsible, and that they follow the rules. There are so many emotional issues at stake in this debate that it is quite hard to get the participants to talk in a measured way about it.

Our review found that there are a lot of claims that advertising or marketing cause obesity or 'sexualisation' or 'materialistic' attitudes, but not a lot of hard evidence to support them. Of course, the same is true of arguments about positive effects. Obviously, that's not to say that advertising has no effect, but there are often other, more substantial factors at stake.

These kinds of debates often get into a ritualistic 'media blaming' mode. We start with undesirable things - childhood obesity, the sexualisation of children, materialism - and look for a single cause. Blaming the media is much easier than addressing some

of the more complex causes of these kinds of phenomena. Media blaming also tends to encourage governments to opt for symbolic responses that don't really make any difference to the problem.

One of the key aims of the report is to take a broader view of what we mean by 'the commercial world'. Advertising is a very small part of a much bigger phenomenon, although it tends to be the main focus of the debate. The report tried to shift the agenda, looking at advertising but also at the balance between the public and the private in other areas of children's lives. For example, there is a chapter on public service television, which is becoming increasingly commercialised; and another one about the ways in which children's play spaces have also become increasingly commercial spaces.

However, the most problematic issue from the government's point of view was education itself. Commercial companies are now involved in education at all sorts of levels, in ways that are not necessarily visible to many people. This isn't just about marketing to schools, but also about companies being involved in the management of schools and in providing educational services.

The key question for the conference was about the implications of these kinds of debates (along with others about internet safety and about the 'sexualisation' of children). Education is often presented in this context as an alternative to government regulation – and it's one that (for obvious reasons) the marketers tend to prefer. In my view, this should not be an either/or choice: there is a need for regulation in certain areas, as well as for education – each does not make the other unnecessary.

However, this particular framing of the issue tends to result in education being seen as a form of protection – a defensive or prophylactic approach to media education that we have largely moved beyond. So while media educators may see opportunities to make their case here, they need to engage critically with these debates rather than accepting them on their own terms.

The other presentation I did was about another piece of research we're currently doing, for an ESRC-funded project called 'Developing Media Literacy'. My colleagues on this project are Andrew Burn, Becky Parry and Mandy Powell. Although I have done a good deal of classroom-based research over the years, this is the first opportunity I've had to do something big and systematic in this area.

We're looking at what and how kids might learn about media, across the age range. When I've done research in this area before it's mainly been with older students in secondary schools. One of the things that people (like Cary Bazalgette) have found doing work with younger kids is that they are capable of a lot more than we might imagine: many of the things we have tended to see as more suited to fourteen to sixteen year olds can

actually be achieved by much younger children.

For example, video editing is something teachers are now doing with fourteen year olds, and often that would be their first experience of it. But actually much younger children are capable of learning how to put a coherent narrative together in moving images, and are able to use editing tools to do that. They're also capable of reflecting and developing a critical understanding of what they've done. So that would suggest then that we need to have a serious look at how progression happens - how learning happens across the age range.

We're operating here with a sort of spiral curriculum model - taking each of the established Media Studies 'key concepts' and looking at how you would teach them to seven year olds, ten year olds, twelve year olds, and so on. We're working with a couple of specialist media schools in very contrasting locations, and with some of their feeder primary schools.

Our presentation at the conference talked about a large-scale survey we did of the teachers and kids in these schools. Our findings here question the oft-repeated claim that there is an enormous gap between children's media experiences and those of teachers – the 'digital natives versus digital immigrants' argument. We also talked about a few of the teaching activities we've done - a couple of early 'diagnostic' activities designed to get at what the children already know, and then one of the more sustained classroom activities around film narrative.

We're still in the middle of the fieldwork for this project, so it's far too early to have much in the way of definitive findings. For me, some of the most eye-opening things are emerging from the contrast between the two locations: it should not be such a surprise, but media education means something very different for children from different social class backgrounds, with very different kinds of cultural capital, and this is something that hasn't been looked at very much, or very systematically, before.

While our aim is to develop a body of research evidence that will inform and extend current practice in media education, we are also looking at some of the absences and the contradictions. I have always felt that media education suffers from an excess of grandiose rhetoric – stories about how we can change the world, save democracy or empower the powerless. While it can be morale-boosting in the short term, I don't think that kind of rhetoric serves teachers very well: we need to cast a more dispassionate eye on what really happens in the classroom, however awkward or even painful that might feel.

Henry Jenkins:

I have been using the concept of participatory culture for more than twenty years to describe a context where significant numbers of everyday people are actively shaping the culture around them through their active role in the production, circulation, and appraisal of media content. I first used the concept in *Textual Poachers* to contrast the active, generative culture of fans to more traditional models of spectatorship and consumption. Since that time, I've adopted a more expansive understanding of this concept to include a wide array of different sites of cultural production and circulation which are shaping the digital environment. More than sixty percent of American teens have produced media and a high percentage of them have also shared the media they've produced with a much larger public via some online platform. Some of these did so through school. Many others have done so through their informal involvement in a range of popular and folk culture practices outside of school through what Mimi Ito would call 'interest driven networks' or James Paul Gee would called 'affinity spaces. I prefer 'participatory culture', because it connects these new practices to a larger history of efforts by citizens to participate in the creation of their culture. This historical perspective also allows us to challenge the language and practices of web 2.0 which refers to a business strategy for courting and capitalising on all of this grassroots media production. No matter how you cut it, many of us are creating and sharing more media than ever before and this citizen-created (rather than user-created) media is having a much larger impact on our society than ever before.

The communities involved in the practices of participatory culture are often rich sites of informal learning, places where people acquire skills and produce new knowledge through their collaborations with each other. Seymor Papert has described the 'Samba Schools' of Brazil, for example, as sites where meaningful participation and learning occur between veterans and newcomers, outside of the fixed hierarchies of formal education. I see many of the same patterns in online communities around the writing of Harry Potter fan fiction, say. But many kids lack access to these communities and their practices outside of schools, blocked both by the digital divide (limited access to technologies) and the participation gap (limited access to skills). So, it becomes important to integrate some of these practices into school, though the differences in the informal practices of creative communities and the formalised practices of conventional education make doing

so a challenge. We've been doing workshops with teachers to try to work through how to make the classroom a more participatory learning environment, one where students learn from each other as much as they learn from teachers, one which encourages creative experimentation.

At the (Media Literacy) conference, I spoke about the work we've done around reading in a participatory culture, which centrally is designed to get students to reflect on remix – not simply as a contemporary cultural practice but also as something which has shaped many of the works which constitute the literary canon. Our goal is to better understand how authors like Herman Melville or Charles Dickens built on the culture around them and how their works in turn have been taken up by later creative artists and reshaped towards new expressive ends. We teach active reading to give students the vocabulary they need to be able to not only critique and interpret literary works but to use them as raw materials for their own cultural productions. And we encourage each student to take ownership over specific parts of the text – individual units of the writing, specific topics of interest, specific characters – which they get to share with their classmates, creating a space of shared expertise and collective intelligence.

Marc Prensky:

We live in an era of accelerating change. The world, especially the world of young people, is going to evolve much faster and further than almost anyone imagines. Already today, successful new media and technologies can reach over a billion people in less than a year: this will only get faster. In their lifetimes, today's students will see technology's power increase by a factor of one trillion. Tools will increasingly come fast, and disappear fast. Observers are often behind the curve. Today much research and many analyses are out of date before they are posted or published.

A useful way to reconcile the wisdom of the past with the tools of the future is by thinking in terms of verbs and nouns. All our tools, from PowerPoint, to video, to computers, to Wikipedia, to the Internet are 'nouns'. But they are nouns for doing (or learning or perfecting, or practicing) various useful skills, or 'verbs', e.g. communicating effectively, thinking critically, calculating accurately, learning, persuading, etc. In the 21st century these important verbs (i.e. skills) will, for the most part, stay the same as they have always been (communicating, analysing etc remain important), but the nouns (tools) to do

them will change rapidly. We should be helping our students use the best, most up-to-date nouns for each verb they are trying to master.

Some important questions for Media Studies:

- By starting with, and focusing on nouns (eg cinema, internet, multimedia, story) rather than verbs, are the Media Studies people looking at the educational part backwards?
- Is the emphasis so often placed on 'story' outdated? What comes after story, especially in an era of compression and limited time? I do not think we are spending enough time thinking about this, and about what short forms (aphorism, haiku, pictures, short video, +++) are most effective and appropriate for 21st century communication of ideas, thoughts and emotions, as time for the often redundant and over-padded longer forms disappears. Do we still require the fable of The tortoise and the hare, or will Slow and steady wins the race do?
- Are we being overly protective of form (story, physical books, etc.) over content? My sense is that many are holding too tightly to old (and even to not-so-old) artifacts. I believe the printing of new physical books will disappear in one generation or two, as electronics take over.
- I observe that, for the non-intellectual classes (perhaps 80 percent of our people), text, both reading and writing, is already on the way out. Most of these people get their information from video and rarely read or write, on or off the job. What little textual work that they do is being quickly taken over by technologies that turn text to speech, speech to text and can read any text a camera is pointed at (e.g. a road sign) in any language. Already today one does not need to know how to read and write to be literate on a functional level. So while universal literacy may still be our goal, does it have to mean textual literacy? How long will that be true? In many ways video is the 'new text' (as consultant Mark Anderson says). The long-term importance of You Tube and its spinoffs has been greatly underestimated.
- Finally, the most under-appreciated, and least taught and known media literacy is programming, in the larger sense of being able to make our increasingly complex machines do what we want. Today, we have returned in some ways to the middle ages, in that if a person (even an important, well-educated one) wants to write a programme he or she generally has to hire a scribe (i.e. a programmer) to do the job for them. Yet almost everything we do requires some programming. Should universal literacy in programming be in our future? How do we accomplish this? At what levels, and with what tools? As Tyson Gill says: 'Programming is not essentially a technological challenge. It's a communications challenge.' When will students be required to submit

programs as evidence of their progress? How long until we see the first PhD thesis written entirely as a computer program?

Cary Bazalgette:

My main preoccupation for about 25 years has been, firstly, with the proposition of media education as an entitlement for all, and what that entails in terms of policy and advocacy, and, as a corollary, with looking at how and where media education begins – which has led me to an interest in how babies and very young children start to learn about media. Is this going to be one of those conversations where the men talk about technology and the woman talks about babies? I hope not.

I'm an ex-classroom teacher and professionally what I used to call, in self-deprecating tones, an arts bureaucrat. So I have always been struggling with the problem of how to keep all the key elements on the policy table, and to counteract what seems to be the innate tendency of institutions, ideological formations and academic disciplines to barricade themselves inside sectors of knowledge and defend them against all comers. Hence my formulation of the 'three Cs' mantra: the argument that media education must include cultural, critical and creative elements and my interest in ensuring that the Media Literacy Conference should combine teacher training workshops with research presentations, and that it should include primary education professionals and classroom teachers.

I devised the "3Cs" formulation at a meeting of the UK's Task Force on Media Literacy. I was trying to get the task force members to understand that media literacy was more than just 'creativity'. I argued for cultural learning because learners need to broaden their experience of different kinds of cultures, contemporary and historical; for critical learning because learners need to acquire a whole range of critical tools with which to analyse texts, debate them and make judgments about them; and for creative learning because learners need to acquire the disciplines of making meaning with the tools that are to hand, and in the context of their cultural and critical knowledge.

Exchanges: Action and Scale

Next, we asked for some further precision on the key issue of 'participation' and, crucially, whether we are really seeing anything particularly new in the so-called (by some, but nobody in this conversation) 'media 2.0' era, specifically with regard to fan behaviour.

Are these types of participatory cultural practices likely to increase? The word 'fan' does come from 'fanatic', after all, and there has always been a fairly small constituency more involved in their media consumption than others. Aren't we really just seeing the latest generation of this type of thing? Or will it go from being quite niche to more large-scale, and therefore presumably mainstream? Henry responded thus:

> **HJ:** A key argument in *Convergence Culture* is that the category of the fan has shifted from something on the margins of the culture, someone still living in their parents' basement in the stereotypes, to something much more central to the way the culture is now operating. Some of this has to do with a shift in the ways that digital media has made fan practices much more visible and has impacted the shape, scale, and scope of fan participations. It is hard to get accurate measures of what has been and remains, to a degree, a decentralised and underground mode of grassroots production and participation. But all signs are that the number of people participating in fan like activities exploded with the rise of the internet. Anecdotally, I can say that when I first started writing about fandom, very few of my students knew anything about fan fiction. Now, most of my students know about it, a high percentage have read it, and some portion have written it, suggesting it is much more available to them as a cultural option. A second factor, though, has been the fragmentation of the audience which the explosion of media options has represented. Media producers now actively seek out fans as the most loyal and visible segment of their audience and are coming to fans on new terms. And as other institutions – from politics to the church – recognise a value of participation, they are embracing practices which were once the realm of fandom. Keep in mind, though, that the arguments for a more participatory culture do not rest on fans alone, but include a range of different subcultures which also stress the active participation in the culture through the production and sharing of media. As this occurs, fan practices may seem a bit less subversive and a bit more mainstream than before, but there are very real conflicts in the interests of these grassroots participants and those producing and distributing media on a commercial basis.

> **CB:** Although I am very sympathetic to, and excited by, what Henry was presenting at the conference, I find myself asking questions that are mainly generated by the 'critical' strand of learning and which are primarily seeking some 'what next' information. To start with some simple points, when Henry says 'significant numbers of everyday people are actively shaping the culture around them through

their active role in the production, circulation, and appraisal of media content', then I want to know what 'significant numbers' means. How these have been added up, and by whom, and for what purpose? I want to know how 'actively shaping' is defined and what counts as an 'active role' in producing, circulating and appraising, and the extent to which this can be teased out from the 'web 2.0' business model. My understanding has been that there's a smallish core of people to whom it would be appropriate to apply these descriptions, and a huge periphery of relatively superficial engagement. I'm not saying that's not significant as well, but it's different from what Henry seems to be saying. I very much agree about integrating some of these practices into schools. But I'm concerned about the focus on what seems to me a fairly idyllic scenario of 'creative experimentation', 'collective intelligence' and teachers and kids learning from one another, where there's no imperative to also learn ABOUT the web 2.0 business model - about how the systems they're all using are financed and regulated. Where's the political learning? Where might it come from?

In addition I, along with several other people in the audience with some background or experience in primary schooling and especially in early years, took exception to Henry's formulation that opposes the 'active, generative culture of fans to more traditional models of spectatorship and consumption'. There's another way of seeing this kind of opposition: why not contrast the 'active, generative culture of small children's play' with the 'more adult models of spectatorship and consumption'? This introduces a much more radical argument, I think, about the assumptions we are making about learning, development, pedagogy and the power structures in education. I'd suggest that those young people who really are 'actively shaping the culture around them' are simply re-asserting their right to play and experiment that we all tend to lose when the 'shades of the prison-house' close around us. Who builds the prison-house and whose interests are served by maintaining it?

[Editors' note – at this point, Marc Prensky left the discussion.]

HJ: There are many ways we have of identifying and calculating the amount of active participation in our culture. For my own work, I tend to rely on the various studies done by the Pew Center for the Internet and American Life - especially their recurring estimates of the number of young people who have produced and shared

media. Their 2005 report showed that 57 per cent of American teens had produced media content for the internet; by 2007, those numbers had grown to 64 per cent and they have reportedly continued to grow since. These numbers, of course, differ from one national context to the next, but they suggest a significant shift in levels of production and participation from the pre-digital era. The Pew study may undercount the roles that internet users play not in producing original content but mobilizing existing content - curating, commenting, critiquing, circulating content produced by others (whether commercial, nonprofit, or amateur produced media.) In some ways this is the most banal form of participation, yet my forthcoming book on *Spreadable Media* will argue that shifts on this level are having real impact on the production, distribution, and consumption of culture.

Now, looking at those numbers we can see two things: first, there is a significant number of people who have not yet made the first step towards more active participation in the culture, either because they lack access and resources (the digital divide) or because they lack the skills and sense of empowerment (the participation gap) - roughly 36 per cent based on the 2007 numbers. The research of David Buckingham and Sonia Livingstone, among others, open up a second challenge – that young people may be participating in ways that are less than fully engaging and meaningful for them. This is why it becomes important to have interventions at the level of education.

The Digital Youth Project coming at this issue ethnographically identifies three genres of participation - hanging out, messing around, and geeking out. Mimi Ito estimates that roughly ten per cent of the young people they encountered in their qualitative work were involved in forms of geeking out - that is, participation in interest driven networks, which are the kinds of groups most often cited in research on participatory culture. Joe Kahne found roughly similar numbers in his quantitative work trying to identify involvement with different kinds of online networks. My working hypothesis then is that in the US context, the percentage of young people actively involved in some form of participatory culture is somewhere between ten (too low given the other form of participation through friendship networks) and 64 per cent (too high since it includes many failed or frustrating attempts to participate), depending on what we count as participatory culture, that a significantly larger percentage have had some access to culture produced by grassroots participants, and that there has been a steady and substantive growth in

the numbers of people creating and sharing media over the past decade. To me, this represents a fundamentally different culture than one where media production and circulation is almost entirely professionalised. And in many cases, we are seeing what educational theorists describe as legitimate peripheral participation - that is, they are actively watching how culture gets produced with the recognition that they can engage and join the process when they feel ready. As we make the production of culture more transparent, as people see culture of varying degrees of professional quality, then there is often greater support for people to make bad media, get feedback, and grow as content creators. And this points to a place where the incorporation of some of these activities and as importantly the skills and mental models associated with them through media education can make a real difference.

The distribution of these skills and experiences does follow some predictable class, gender, and race lines. The Pew research finds that these activities are spread more or less evenly along rural, urban, and suburban lines, with slightly more participation among urban students. It finds that boys and girls engage in different kinds of cultural production but they are not that far apart in their ability to participate. Where the skills and experiences are introduced to lower income communities, there seems to be an eagerness to participate and a creative impulse which pulls the media in new directions, which suggests that the divides have much to do with lack of access to both resources and skills.

What I am calling participatory culture has a long history. Many of the groups which are most actively involved in producing and sharing media pre-exist the internet, though all of them have experienced dramatic growths in activity since they have moved online. In the case of the fan communities which have been the primary focus of my research, we can trace a 150 year history of grassroots media production and circulation across a range of new and emerging technologies - printing presses in the 19th century, amateur radio in the early 20th century, photocopiers in the mid-century, and digital media by the end of the century and beyond. These groups have been early adopters of podcasting, MP3s, blogs and journals, and social networking tools, often taking very active roles in passing those skills along to others in their community. Rarely have these groups been seen as professional media makers, rather they have existed on the fringes of the culture, responding to media created by others, participating in folk and subcultural

practices, but now their work has gained much greater visibility than before and circulates much further beyond the borders of their own communities.

For that reason, I do not think it appropriate to collapse these forms of cultural production into the business models associated with web 2.0. Web 2.0 companies have generated platforms which are often shared sites of cultural distribution across a range of these communities and they have helped to create tools which are more easily used by casual participants. They have at the same time exploited the creative energies of groups which have long sought ways to expand the production and circulation of culture. So, there are strong links to be drawn between technological, business, and cultural developments here, but only if we maintain some clarity about the history of each.

And I certainly think preserving the distinction is key if we are to critically and politically engage with the corporate strategies which are shaping who gets to participate and how. In our white paper, we identify three key obstacles which media education needs to address, having to do with the capacity to participate (the participation gap), with the development of ethical frameworks for thinking about participation (the ethics challenge), and with the development of a critical vocabulary for understanding the terms of our participation (the transparency problem). Our curricular materials, to varying degrees, try to address each of these three challenges.

Are these participatory culture practices tied to particular class experiences? There are several ways we might address that question. First, one might argue that these skills represent a new digital variation on the old 'hidden curriculum.' Just as in the 1960s kids from homes where there were opera records and encyclopedias, trips to museums and dinner table conversations about books and politics, performed better in school than kids who lacked access to these resources and experiences, kids today who have a broad range of participatory experiences seem to perform better in schools than those who didn't. We can argue that the schools respect some of the skills emerging from these practices because they fit the school habitus, but we also have to acknowledge that those with these skills are going to enjoy expanded opportunities when compared to those being left behind.

Second, whether we use my participatory culture or James Paul Gee's 'affinity spaces' or a range of other models of how such communities work, the evidence suggests that they create many different opportunities for participation and many forms of contributions which members can make. The Wikipedia community talks about systemic bias to talk about how the current content the project generate reflects those groups currently participating in its production: so the entry on Isaac Asimov is longer than the entry on Woodrow Wilson and both dwarf the entry on Caesar Chavez, to use just some obvious markers of different groups. As we broaden who has access to the skills and resources, we can expect both new kinds of communities with their own norms and cultures and new forms of participation in the existing communities depending on what young people bring to the table from their previous cultural lives.

Of course, these communities are not always idylically supportive for their members. You Tube, for example, has notoriously harsh commentators who are hostile to diversity and thus can exhibit a chilling impact on people who want to enter these spaces for the first time. That said, Patricia Lange's work on video bloggers show that the community has compensatory mechanisms for encouraging and sustaining participation. The fan fiction world has historically been more welcoming, with a solid system in place for providing mentorship for new contributors. So, some of the politics around participatory culture is a politics of inclusion. It is vital to broaden who gets to engage in these practices which are having an impact on young people's chances of success in school and the quality of their economic, political, and creative lives. At the same time, we need to be agnostic about whether our current accounts of the skills associated with these practices are complete when we are seeing continuing waves of diversification within participatory culture as more and more groups are asserting their presence in the online world. Whatever we see as the current level of participation, I would see expanding, broadening, diversifying participation as an important goal - a key struggle for social justice.

To respond to Cary's other concerns, my own work has grown out of a larger trajectory of investigating fan cultures, but fandom is only one potential point of entry into understanding participatory culture. James Paul Gee, say, comes at this from a focus on gaming cultures, Sasha Costanza-Chocks from the study of activism, others from the study of citizen journalism or from youth subcultures.

When I talked about fandom offering us a different picture from dominant 'models', I meant models as in ways we conceptualize spectatorship, and not necessarily the actual practices of spectatorship, which I am convinced are more active, critical, and creative than most people have imagined. In many ways, the rise of digital media is making this grassroots creativity more visible than before, though in making it more visible, it has increased the connections between once isolated practices. Cary wonders whether these experiences might be better linked to childhood. This is part of what we had in mind when we made play one of the first on our list of new media literacy skills and asserted its continued importance into adulthood. We share your concern that schools often strip away the capacity to play and with it we lose a prime motivation for and process of learning. And we are finding that play is perhaps the skill most eagerly embraced by the teachers we work with and many of them see it as fundamental to the other skills we've identified. I have always like my former MIT colleague Mitch Resnick's concept of 'Lifelong Kindergarten'.

That said, I would express two concerns:

- First, there can be a tendency to over-romanticize the playful child as a noble savage who is not yet tainted by adult civilization, and it can be hard to prevent such assumptions from creeping into our work. It's a powerful myth and one which has an affective force we may want to tap, but we also need to maintain some scepticism.

- Second, I do not want to reduce all adult and youth forms of cultural participation to a continuation of childhood play. Fans are often described negatively as suffering from ''arrested development' because they continue to engage with play and fantasy, the negative version of the romantic notion of childhood and adulthood. And many of them would insist that they have acquired and developed skills at cultural production, not to mention the capacity for deeper reflection through their work, which far surpass what one could do in early childhood. This argues for the importance of learning and acquiring skills as we grow older, even if those skills get layered onto foundation from our earliest childhood. This also suggests the importance of early interventions to protect and strengthen the childhood imagination and link it in meaningful ways to participatory culture.

[Editors' note – at this point, David Buckingham left the discussion.]

CB: While I acknowledge that the challenge for all educators who accept a learner-centred model is to judge when, how and with what to intervene and also of course how to assess progress I am wondering whether Henry is primarily using the term 'play' as a provocation rather than as a fully-considered analysis of learning processes, and in doing so, is necessarily invoking conventional, post-romantic views of 'play' that link it to fantasy and imagination, and oppose it to work and to the 'harder' learning that is involved in the acquisition of more sophisticated knowledge. This is an ideological construct, deeply bound up with nineteenth century views of childhood (and, by extension, the childlike savage and the idealised 'child-wife'). We don't have to see it that way. I prefer to see it as, essentially, self-directed learning. It involves practicing and refining skills, testing hypotheses, rehearsing scenarios, devising metaphors and constructing narratives: not usually as solitary activities, but in the company of others (such as, initially, parents and older siblings) who are likely to encourage reflection and the deliberate acquisition of new skills (eg eating with a spoon, becoming toilet-trained, thinking of oneself as 'a big girl now' or as 'a brave boy who doesn't cry').

Therefore I think it IS important to hold on to the concept of play-as-learning (note that I am NOT saying 'play that helps you to learn') in considering what educators ought to be doing in response to the participatory culture that Henry describes. We are confronted with a huge amount of learning and activity by children and young people that has taken place without adult intervention. I see lots of parallels here with my own arguments about the interpretative skills that young children have acquired from moving image media before they learn to read, or even to speak, and how this ought to substantially change the ways we approach early learning in school. So for me, it's not enough to describe and analyse what kids are doing with media important though that is, of course. My focus tends to be on how education policymakers can be made to see that kids' non-school media learning is an opportunity rather than a threat.

HJ: The working definitions and discussions of play in the white paper are remarkably similar to the wording you use here, Cary. Here's part of what we wrote:

"Play, as psychologists and anthropologists have long recognized, is key in shaping children's relationship to their bodies, tools, communities, surroundings and knowledge. Most of children's earliest learning comes through playing with the materials at hand. Through play, children try on roles, experiment with culturally central processes, manipulate core resources, and explore their immediate environments. As they grow older, play can motivate other forms of learning.... Some have expressed scepticism that schools should or could teach young people how to play. This resistance reflects the confusion between play as a source of fun and play as a form of engagement. Play in the context argued here is a mode of active engagement, one that encourages experimentation and risk-taking, one that views the process of solving a problem as important as finding the answer, one that offers clearly defined goals and roles that encourage strong identifications and emotional investments."

We try very hard to separate this more social/cognitive understanding of play from more romantic concepts, though in practice, I am certain that those concepts, which are so pervasive in our culture, spill over and shape how teachers and students understand these concepts and what gives them such emotional resonance with the educators we work with. I think the more we both talk, we are on the same page here, just warily sniffing out each other because of the many ways our culture uses and abuses some of these concepts.

CB: I certainly think we're generally very much on the same ground! It's interesting though to tease out slight differences of emphasis. I think you're more concerned with achieving a richer and more precise account of what's going on in learners' creative and participatory activities, while I keep turning towards a critique of what teachers get ordered to do in classrooms, or think they are compelled to do. It's very encouraging that you and others are focusing on play and are providing a more differentiated account of the activities that currently get lumped together in popular discourse as "play". To my mind it's the use of the term 'play' that can be the problem, precisely because it contains these multiple meanings. For you, I think the focus is more on older learners and how to describe and analyse what they are doing in ways that include relating it back to what children do; for me, the focus is on how we can describe what babies and very young children do in ways that can be seen to link up with later behaviours that don't count as 'play'. Some fascinating examples of this emerged in a recent film education research project I was involved

in, where teachers of seven to ten year olds encountered the kinds of pedagogy employed by teachers of three to five year olds and began a real re-think of their practice as they came to recognise that a lot of what the younger children were talking about and doing demonstrated that they were already engaging with concepts that weren't 'supposed' to be taught until they were much older. They were shocked to realise how rarely they actually listened to what children had to say, and had underestimated what kinds of ideas they might be able to handle in the context of learning about film.

"Going Forward"

To finish, we asked Henry and Cary to offer some key themes for the *MERJ* readership – who we see as a broad church of teachers and researchers with a shared passion for media education pedagogy (the social practice of media literacy - as opposed to abstracted content, competences and skills) – what are the most important issues for media teachers in 2011 and what kinds of research should we be doing?

CB: I hope the MERJ readership includes people who teach with or research media education with people younger than sixteen but my impression is that it doesn't. However, pedagogy ought not to be that different whatever the age group, even though, sadly, it often is. Essentially there are and always have been two types of pedagogy: learner-centred and teacher-centred. Learners usually need a bit of both. In recent years - in the UK at least - school teaching has become markedly more teacher-centred. Media teaching should require a higher level of learner-centred activity given that learners are likely to have acquired quite a lot of knowledge of the subject outside the classroom and this at least needs to be assessed.

None of the following is essentially new, even if some of the technologies used might be (and you can teach about media without massive technological investment).

I **emphasise** to teachers that they should use open questions, be prepared to listen to what children have to say, to ask follow-up or subsidiary questions that encourage further reflection, and to plan their further teaching in ways that take account of the critical capabilities and interests that the children present. Most teachers in primary and mainstream secondary schools find this pretty difficult, as

it goes against their training.

I also **encourage** them to get children to work creatively with extremely basic tools and modest ambitions because these constraints should encourage their creativity, and in class management and budgetary terms are more likely to allow for repeated opportunities to undertake creative work: it is only in the second and third attempts at creative activity that children really start to progress in their creative thinking. I encourage them to focus on editing (whatever the medium).

I **believe** that teachers have a responsibility to introduce learners to texts (in any medium) that they may have not encountered before, as well as offering them ways of considering in a new light the types of text they already know. I also believe that teachers ought to encourage learners to move to and fro between different media (eg social media and novels, poetry and short films) in order to explore their commonalities and specificities. In doing so they should be developing awareness of and capabilities with critical concepts common to all media: narrative, genre, representation, audience, modality.

In classroom management terms teachers need to ensure that learners get to work in different size groups and individually, and can get individual attention from a teacher from time to time, because all these contexts favour different kinds of learning. Assessment should include self-assessment by the learner.

All this is pretty standard stuff in progressive education and has been for as long as formal education has existed (say 3000 years?). Unfortunately much of it has been demonised in the UK in the last fifteen to twenty years so a whole generation of teachers find it all very new - though I'm glad to say a lot of them find it liberating.

As educators, we need less focus on what people are doing with media (interesting though that is, lots of other people are doing it) and more focus on questions like "did anybody learn anything? and if so, what?" and in particular, in learning progression. Obviously this doesn't mean completely deserting the descriptive work but it does mean looking at what kids learn and how (both self-directed and in the classroom). I've always liked the idea of a research project that gets new parents to keep a diary of their one to four year olds' media encounters and their (apparent?) media learning. I wish I'd been able to keep track of my grandson (now aged nine),

who was one of the last of the analogue generations. My twin grandchildren, now aged one, are growing up in a completely digital media environment, and I've lost the opportunity to compare the two experiences. Has anyone done this?

To relate this to the previous discussion: I think these assumptions underlie much of my exchanges with Henry, and I imagine that we'd probably agree that media education does make a rethink of pedagogy more urgent. I used to resist this argument but now I don't.

HJ: American educator Rene Hobbes tells us that media literacy should foster scepticism and not cynicism. What we need to avoid in discussing participatory culture is the aura of inevitability which can lead to complacency on the one hand and cynicism on the other. I believe that there are robust communities of interest on the web which are great models for how informal learning works, but if we do not learn from those models and apply them through formal education, there will be great inequalities in who has access to the technology and the skills needed to participate in the rapidly evolving media landscape. This is precisely why my ideas about participatory culture have led me towards being an advocate for media literacy.

To be clear, for me, participatory culture is not something we have already accomplished. It is a relative term, suggesting that our culture is more participatory than it used to be, less participatory that it should be. For me, participatory culture is in Pierre Levy's sense 'an achievable utopia', a set of ideals against which we measure our progress, a goal we are fighting towards. My mentor John Fiske told us in the 1980s that new media represent new opportunities to struggle, that they shift the terms of conflict, may allow us ways to think past conceptual impacts, but they are no substitute for struggle itself. And so for me, the push towards a more participatory culture is a flag that we should rally behind because it identifies what we are fighting for and not just what we are fighting against.

Why does participatory culture matter? Well, why does democracy matter? Why does diversity matter? Why does economic opportunity matter? In each case, these goals which have long motivated work in education seem bound up with expanding the communication capacities (technical, social, culture) of everyday people. I see participatory culture as the first step towards progress on any of these fronts. It is not

that computers will set us free, which is a naïve technological determinist idea, but that we will forge new relationships, grasp new power, and transform the cultural resources to which we have access to if we are able to expand who has access to the means of production and distribution of information, culture, and knowledge. Skeptics have much to contribute by identifying those challenges we need to work together to overcome. But we do not fight battles we do not believe we can win and so the cynic does little to change the society. As academics, we are bad at accepting partial victories, but at the moment, participatory culture is a partial victory in so far as a significant number of people (although we don't agree on how to count them) have made a transition in their communicative power over the last decade through hard won battles to broaden participation.

What does this mean for classroom teachers? Project New Media Literacies has been doing extensive work with professional development over the past four years. We've built a range of resources which model how an approach based on participatory culture might change how we teach basic school projects, hence our work on reading in a participatory culture. We've developed an online community to support teachers who want to think creatively about these challenges, including resources which allow them to learn more about each of the skills we associate with participatory culture. And we are building a platform which will allow teachers to share and remix 'challenges', which allow students to work with all kinds of media materials as they learn to navigate these new forms of culture and knowledge production and as they begin to put the skills into practice.

We are promoting what we call "participatory learning", which consists for us in:

- A learning ecosystem which integrates what happens in school into what happens elsewhere in the students lives, which especially incorporates their online lives into the educational process.
- Co-created expertise, where each participant in the classroom takes ownership over the process of knowledge production and is respected for what they have to contribute to the group's collective learning.
- The use of authentic learning materials, which allow students to engage with and critique elements of their real world environment, including chunks of media they are already consuming outside the school hours.

- A greater focus on motivation and engagement in the classroom, much as a good game has clearly articulated goals and roles which push the player to perform at the outer limits of their capacity.
- The encouragement of play and creativity as part of the learning process, so that critique leads to other forms of expressive activity rather than being an end unto itself.

These are the principles which shaped our curriculum on Learning in a Participatory Culture. This is not a one-size-fits-all solution. We know that some schools have a vast array of resources, though many schools have locked down the channels through which young people are engaging with participatory culture out of fear and ignorance. We know that other schools have almost no resources though there are ways that the skills can still be taught abstracted from the specific tools and platforms with which they are most actively associated today. One of my students taught a new media literacy class last summer in Senegal in a school where the power generator had broken and she had no access to electricity for most of the term. She did so because the new media literacies are not simply technical skills; they are habits of mind, ways of processing information, which are technology agnostic and can be applied under a range of circumstances.

We actively encourage teachers to develop low tech activities which put more emphasis on the social and cultural dimensions of participatory culture. At the end of the day, you need to suspend your disbelief long enough to identify the battle we need to fight and the means through which we can make progress in that struggle.

Editors' Closing Remarks

A challenging end to a rich dialogue between two key participants in our community of practice. We hope that this discussion, along with the earlier detail provided by Prensky and Buckingham respectively, will be not only provide intellectual interest but also some more direct political recharging for the 'interesting times' and 'tough decisions' ahead. Responding to the challenge that we have been 'looking at the educational part backwards' (Prensky) might well require a rethink of pedagogy (Bazalgette) towards a greater focus on motivation and engagement in the classroom (Jenkins). Equally, research evidence is making a compelling case for paying more attention to the determining presence of class and cultural capital in how media literacy is distributed and practiced (Buckingham).

We want *MERJ* to offer a number of connections – between primary, secondary, further

and higher media educators, between teaching and research and between what might sometimes look like lofty 'ivory tower' ideas from big name academics, policy-making and what we do on a Monday morning in kindergarten, with year 9, in prison education or in a postgraduate seminar. The keynotes struck by this exchange ought to resonate across these spaces.

Richard Berger and Julian McDougall

May 2011

Editorial Postscript

We are on a learning curve as journal editors, trying to balance support for our contributors with the rigour of peer review, which can be tricky when the 'mission' is to bridge the gaps and facilitate a dialogue between hitherto discrete sectors. We were excited by the prospect of this email discussion, drawing together in a 'big conversation' some people who we think are important contributors to, and champions for, our community of practice, and we are grateful to all of the participants who gave freely of their time and expertise. We are certainly very pleased with the outcomes, as we hope our readers will be. But it was a tough job, and if you found the transcription a little disjointed, this was due to the substantial edit we were obliged to perform to take account of retrospective changes that were asked for and the withdrawal of two contributors at the second stage of the discussion. We have indicated in the text where these departures happened, but we are not able to publish the exchanges (in the second phase) that led to these exits, so we ask you to appreciate that what you have read is not a 'director's cut'. We hadn't expected any of this and so we share it firstly to explain the strange structure of this published version and secondly in the spirit of learning from our mistakes. If others intend to replicate some of the affordances of 'participatory culture' with strong characters who don't see eye-to-eye, then some protocols and a clear agenda are essential criteria for the task in hand. In the end, though, we all want the same thing and the 'project' (of developing a research-informed community to talk about media education pedagogy) is more important than individuals - and we include ourselves. So on we go.

Further Reading (recent work by contributors)

Bazalgette, C, Harland, J and James, C, 2008. *Lifeblood of Democracy? Learning about Broadcast News* (with Harland, J. and James, C. London: OFCOM; available at http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/market-data-research/media-literacy/medlitpub/lifeblood/

Bazalgette, C (ed), 2009. *Teaching Media in Primary Schools*. London: Sage.

Buckingham, D, 2010. 'Do we really need media education 2.0? Teaching media in the age

of participatory culture' in Drotner, K and Schroder, K (eds) *Digital Content Creation*. New York: Peter Lang.

Buckingham, D, 2009. 'The future of media literacy in the digital age: challenges for policy and practice' in *Euromeduc: Media Literacy in Europe*; available at www.euromeduc.eu/IMG/pdf/Euromeduc_ENG.pdf;

Jenkins, H, 2006. *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*. New York: New York UP.

Prensky, M, 2010. *Teaching Digital Natives: Partnering for Real Learning*. CA: Corwin Press.

In addition, some of the participants' latest ideas can be found in their contribution to the *Media Education Manifesto and CEMP Conversations*, both hosted at www.cemp.ac.uk

Full Articles

A Comparative study of EU Documents on Media Literacy

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Keywords: EU documents; media literacy, UNESCO, policy

Abstract

For many years, media literacy was mainly the realm of educators and only much later did it became a matter of interest for policy makers. UNESCO has been involved with the subject area since the 1980s while the European Union started to take an active interest since the Lisbon Summit of 2000. This study compares the main documents of the Council, the Commission and Parliament (which include a Parliamentary resolution), a Recommendation, a Communication and a Directive. The article analyses differences and similarities in these documents and critically assesses them in the light of academic literature. It compares them, where appropriate, with the two UNESCO documents - the Grunwald Declaration and the UNESCO Paris Agenda - that are referred to in the EU documents. The article will also explore possible implications of these policy positions for the future of media literacy.

Introduction

'Traditonal literacy is no longer sufficient in the digital era'. This is a statement made by Commissioner Vivianne Reding in a press release announcing the publication of the Commission's Communication on media literacy (2007). She is quoted as saying that today, everyone, old and young, needs a greater awareness of how to express themselves effectively, and how to interpret what others are saying, especially on blogs, via search engines or in advertising. She also says that media literacy is crucial for achieving full and active citizenship and is more important than regulation. This statement sheds light on the EU's relatively recent interest in media literacy as an important response to the new socio-cultural and economic environment created by the electronic and the new media, referred to by Reding as 'the digital era'. It also reflects a number of the EU's core policy positions including its policy against regulation by the state and in favour of self-regulation; emphasis on citizenship; and the policy that media literacy transcends both age

and schooling as it is a life-long process.

This study explores some of these themes while critically analysing and comparing the key documents on media literacy published by the Council, the Commission and the Parliament of the European Union. It also compares these documents to the Grunwald Declaration (1982) and the Paris Agenda (2007), the two UNESCO documents referred to in EU documents. The documents of the Committee of Regions and the experts' reports commissioned by the Commission are not analysed in this paper, though, where appropriate, reference is made to some of them.

An economically driven strategy

During the last forty years media policies were marked by a paradigm shift towards deregulation and privatization on the national level. Technological convergence, mainly resulting from digitalization and computerization, together with media concentration in a globalized environment, increased the importance of internationally co-ordinated media policies. However their domain is the technical, administrative and economic level and for this reason the International Telecommunications Union, the World Trade Organisation and the World Intellectual Property Organisation are active in the area. On the other hand attempts at establishing international policies on media content have met with very little success though as McQuail notes 'the development of the Internet has stimulated call for international regulation' (2010: 368).

Two particular developments have attracted the attention of media policy makers on media education. One development was the challenge for local and national cultures posed by globalisation (Hamelink, 1983) and the need to educate users to face these challenges. The other was the realisation of the economic value of media education policies. These two developments influenced the stance taken by policy makers on media education mainly on the national and regional levels. Frau-Meigs and Torrent (2009) map these policies in several parts of the world. This paper studies these developments within the EU.

The EU's direct involvement with media literacy dates to the Lisbon Agenda (2000). This document aims to make the EU 'the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion' (Para 5). According to Zacchetti (2008), media literacy, for the EU, was mainly a means to achieve this aim and the Commission, to put this into practice, has since then taken specific initiatives in the field of media literacy and has integrated media literacy aspects into a number of its existing programmes. The Commission's Communication (December 2007), Parliament's Resolution (2008),

the Commission's Recommendation (2009) and the Council's Conclusion (2008), among other documents, state that media literacy significantly contributes towards the objectives of the Lisbon Agenda.

> A higher degree of media literacy … is particularly important for the establishment of a more competitive and inclusive knowledge economy through boosting competitiveness in the ICT and media sectors, for the completion of a Single European Information Space and for the fostering of inclusion, better public services and quality of life. (Commission's Communication, 2007: Para 1)

This position is reinforced by the Council's Conclusions (2008) which recognise the importance of media literacy and its role to promote the citizens' active participation in the economic life of society (Para 3). The contents and the very title of the Commission's Recommendation (2009), *media literacy in the digital environment for a more competitive audiovisual and content industry and an inclusive knowledge society* provides further evidence. The influence on the economic potential of media literacy is in sharp contrast to the education priority given in UNESCO's documents - e.g. the Grunwald Declaration (1982) and the Paris Agenda (2007).

The Lisbon Agenda (2000) does not directly mention media literacy but instead refers to digital literacy which it considers to be a basic skill (Para 26). Buckingham (2009) argues that digital literacy is frequently defined as a 'life skill'– a form of individual technological competence that is a prerequisite for full participation in society. He points out that such a skill is also essentially functional or operational, that is 'how-to' skill (2009: 17). According to many researchers, for example, Zacchetti, the lack of this life skill would lead to a digital divide (2003) which has serious economic and socio-cultural consequences.

Digital literacy is different from media literacy. It is not just a skill, but as Buckingham points out it is 'also about critical thinking, and about cultural dispositions or tastes. … It is about old media and new media, about books and mobile phones. It is for young and old, teachers and parents … It is about creativity, citizenship, empowerment, inclusion, personalisation, innovation, critical thinking ….' (2009: 15). Zacchetti argues that in media literacy, for example, information is accessed to determine its truthfulness, deception, bias and prejudice (2003). Digital literacy, on the other hand is more about the new media and the internet so much so that the Lisbon Agenda (2000) frequently refers to the internet but not to television, radio or newspapers. The Lisbon Agenda (2000) uses the term digital literacy. It asks member states to ensure that all schools have access to the

Internet by the end of 2001, and that all teachers are skilled in the use of the Internet and multimedia resources by the end of 2002. Buckingham (2009) argues that this preference for digital literacy is complimented by support from the industry, which sees the great commercial potential that results from more people skilled in the use of the new media.

Use of "media literacy" and "media education"

Several terms are used to describe the information, skills and attitudes needed to manage the expanding media environment. Above, this paper has already referred to digital literacy and media literacy in different documents from the EU. The Commission's Communication (December, 2007) refers to image education and film while EU documents also refer to media education. This multiple use of terms does not help achieve clarity in the discussion of the basic concepts.

Media education and media literacy are the two terms mostly used in EU documents. Academic literature distinguishes between the different meanings of these terms. Perez Tornero says that media literacy describes 'the skills and abilities required for conscious, independent development in the new communication environment – digital, global, and multimedia – of the information society' (2008: 103). For him, media literacy is the outcome of the media-education process (2008). For Buckingham (2003), media education is teaching and learning about the media; while media literacy is the knowledge and skills that learners acquire.

Zacchetti, an officer of the Commission, in a personal communication, says that even the Commission considers media education as a process which leads to media literacy. This distinction, however, is not always reflected in EU documents and sometimes these terms are used interchangeably. In the documents of the Commission and the Council, the term media literacy is used profusely while the term media education is never used in the main text. It is only used in footnote 3 of the Commission's Communication (2007). On the other hand, Parliament, in its resolution of 2008, approving the Prets Report (2008) refers to both media education and media literacy. There are instances where the distinction is clear for example 'media education is considered essential to achieving a high level of media literacy' (Para I). However this is not always the case and in Para 13 the terms are used interchangeably.

A linguistic reason may underpin the different usage of 'education' and 'literacy'. As there is no satisfactory translation of the word 'literacy' in French, this language uses the word 'education' where the English version of the documents uses 'literacy'. Bazalgette (2009) suggests that for these reasons it is better to stick to the term media education . This term should also be used to have consistency with the Grunwald Declaration (1982) and

the Paris Agenda (2007) which frequently use media education but never the term media literacy.

The EU's definition of media literacy

Academic literature, for the past two or three decades, has produced an enormous diversity of definitions of media literacy as has been pointed out by, amongst others, Rosembaum et al. (2008: 314). Von Felitzen and Carlsson (2003:12) claim that probably this is because 'this concept has different meanings in different countries and cultures'. Among those who gave definitions or discussed definitions made by others, one can refer to Masterman (1985); Bazalgette et al. (1992); Thoman (1999); Potter (2004); Livingstone et al. (2005); Frau Meigs (2006) and Federov (2008). The definition adopted by the different institutions of the EU includes the three characteristics which are increasingly being used to define media education: access, critical evaluation and creation of media products.

A study carried out for the Commission by the Universidad Autonoma de Barcelona (2007) concluded that a lack of shared vision between member states was among the difficulties for the development of media literacy on an EU level. The Council's Conclusions (2009) accept that media literacy is a dynamic and evolving concept and that common understanding of the concept is affected by cultural, technological, industrial and generational differences. Notwithstanding these factors which militate against a common pan-European definition, the EU succeeded to come up with a definition of media literacy which is basically common to all its institutions.

> Media literacy is generally defined as the ability to access the media, to understand and to critically evaluate different aspects of the media and media contents and to create communications in a variety of contexts. (Commission's Communication, 2007: Para 2)

The substantially common definition given by the three EU institutions is also the result of the public consultation which the Commission launched in October 2006. Many proposed that the ability of critical evaluation and the ability to create and communicate should be part of the definition. The Report on the Results of the Public Consultation (2007) quotes Livingstone together with Millwood Hargrave stressing the importance of critical literacy as part of the definition of media literacy as this helps one to distinguish 'the honest from the deceptive, the public interest from commercial persuasion, the objective and trustworthy from the biased or partisan' (2007: 6).

The proposal to consider the ability to create basic media productions as part of the

definition is also well backed by academic literature. Kirwan et al. (2003) consider as part of media literacy 'the ability to write media texts, increasingly using Information and Communication Technology (ICT) such as desktop publishing, authoring multimedia packages, video filming, photography and digital editing' (2003: 5). Buckingham argues that 'practical, hands-on use of media technology frequently offers the most direct, engaging and effective way of exploring a given topic. It is also the aspect of media education that is most likely to generate enthusiasm from students' (2003: 82).

Several documents, building on the Commission's definition which includes both critical thinking and production, outline what should be included in media literacy programmes. The elements proposed in the Council's Conclusions (2008) build on the belief that media literacy is important in the development of democratic and cultural life of society and that it is central to political culture and active participation by Union citizens (2008, Para A). Parliament's Resolution (2008) considers media literacy as an important part of political education and consumer information while stating that it should include awareness of and familiarity with matters relating to intellectual rights, the mobilisation and democratic participation of citizens and the promotion of intercultural dialogue. According to the Commission's Communication (2007) media literacy programmes should include awareness of copyright issues, a critical approach to quality and accuracy of content and an understanding of the economy of media and the difference between pluralism and media ownership. In its recommendations (2009), the Commission adds the enhancement of the awareness of the European AV heritage and cultural identities. Internet training aimed at children from a very early age, including sessions open to parents on possible risks of the internet, is mentioned in Parliament's and Council's Recommendation (2006).

The above shows that the term "media literacy" is generally used by EU institutions to include also the characteristics attributed to media education. This is particularly evidenced in the Audio Visual Media Services Directive (AVMS Directive 2007) which states that media literacy is not just about skills but also about knowledge and understanding which make it possible for audiences to use media effectively and safely. 'Media-literate people will be able to exercise informed choices, understand the nature of content and services and take advantage of the full range of opportunities offered by new communications technologies' (Recital 26a).

Empowerment or inoculation?

Different EU documents refer to the need of protection in view of the risks incurred in some media usage and the harm that can possibly result, especially to minors. The protection of minors is treated at length in the Recommendation of the EU Parliament and

of the Council of 20 December 2006. References to risk and harm are mainly made in the context of the new media especially the internet. Faced by the real possibility of harmful content in some media products, especially for children, the EU recommends a battery of initiatives including legislative initiatives on the EU level, regulation on the national level, codes of self-regulation and media literacy.

One can legitimately ask whether the EU's attitude to the media reflects the inoculation approach so popular until the 1960s and which, according to Buckingham (2001), had a resurgence in the 1990s because of the increased importance of the new media. However, it can be argued that while the inoculation model sought to protect people preferably by persuading them not to use the media, EU documents state that media literacy should empower people to protect themselves. The Commission's Communication (2007) states that the Safer Internet Plus programme aims at empowering parents, teachers and children. Moreover, the AVMS Directive (2007) claims that media-literate people will be better able to protect themselves and their families from harmful or offensive material (Recital 26a). Council notes that references to risk should be carried out in the context of media literacy policies putting forward a generally positive message (Council's Conclusions, 2009).

Buckingham (2009) and Livingstone (2004), argue that these references to the empowerment of the individual reflects the transfer of responsibility from states to individuals in line with a neo-liberal strategy which is however presented as a democratic move. In a de-regulated market economy such that espoused by the EU, the responsibility to protect people from the negative effects of market forces, according to Buckingham, is shifted from government on to consumers that is from public regulation to self-regulation as we can see in many other areas of modern social policy' (2009: 16). O'Neill and Barnes claim that several commentators treat this concept of 'empowering the user' with scepticism as it is seen as an unfair burden which 'leaves individuals vulnerable to much more powerful forces, and without essential measures to guarantee and protect their rights'' (2008: 54). This is part of the paradigm shift that we have seen in media policies.

Media literacy in formal and non-formal education

The strategy adopted by the EU considers media literacy as a life-long process encompassing all citizens and involving many stakeholders. Council's Conclusions (2009), point out that formal, informal and non-formal education plays an important role in the development of both media literacy and creativity for all people in society. Parliament's Resolution (2008) 'maintains that media education activities have to encompass all citizens

– children, young people, adults, older people, and people with disabilities' (Para 11). This is a life long process as it 'begins in the home with learning how to select from the media services available… and continues at school and during lifelong learning' with the contribution of many stakeholders extending from national, governmental and regulatory authorities to the work of media professionals and institutions (Para 12).

According to the AVMS directive (2007), it is the primary responsibility of national authorities to include media literacy in school curricula at all levels. The place that it should have in these schools is, according to Buckingham (2003), the subject of a controversy that is alive today as it was twenty years ago. Masterman (1985) said that media literacy can be a subject on its own, be integrated with other subjects or it can be studied in some depth as, for example, part of social studies, or language and communication courses. On the other hand, Buckingham (2003) discussed the possibility of media literacy as part of various subjects particularly highlighting, language, literature and ICTs. Frau-Meigs claims that the tendency which advocated media education across the curriculum tended to adopt the attitude that an 'issue that is every teachers' responsibility can quickly become nobody's responsibility' (2006:13).

Different EU institutions take different sides in this debate. Parliament recommends in its Resolution (2008) that the way forward lies both 'in the creation of a specific subject – media education – as well as an interdisciplinary approach combined with out-of-school subjects' (Para 20). The Commission's Recommendation (2009), on the other hand, does not take a clear stand suggesting an open debate on the inclusion of media literacy in the compulsory education curriculum and as part of the provision of key competencies for lifelong learning.

In line with its holistic approach, the EU widens the spectrum of stakeholders that are expected to promote media literacy. The importance of parents (Parliament's Resolution, 2008,) and teachers (Commission's Recommendation, 2009) is perhaps the most obvious to point out. Both the Commission's Recommendation (2009) and the Council's conclusions (2009) highlight also the important role that civil society is expected to have in the promotion of media literacy (Commission's Recommendation, 2009). Media industries are expected to play a crucial role (Council's Conclusions, 2009). The Commission's Communication (2009) expects industry, among other things, to provide people with user-friendly information; make people aware of different forms of advertising; spread information about the production and editing of creative content and provide information packs especially for young people. This direction is in line with current media policies emphasise the role of all non-governmental institutions while downplaying the role of the state and regulatory institutions.

Some implications for the future of media literacy in the EU

This paper points towards the implications of the EU policies for the future of media literacy as well as points towards the difference that media education policies should make for media policies in general.

The EU policy documents on media literacy are bound to influence the future development of media policy in Member States in at least three ways. Media literacy will now be given more importance in formal and non-formal educational programmes. The content of these programmes will probably now give more prominence to digital Literacy and the new media. There will be greater emphasis on teacher training.

The interest of the EU in media literacy should undoubtedly increase the importance of the subject in member states especially since the EU has been escalating the authority of its documents which now even include a Directive. This increases the pressure on member states to register progress. Specific recommendations and/or requests are made in the documents. Parliament's Resolution (2008) proposed that media literacy be made the ninth key competence for lifelong learning while the AVMS Directive (2007) asked for monitoring and reporting of progress in member states (2007: Art 26).

Will this lead to a pan-EU policy and practice for media literacy? During the EU Parliamentary discussions of the Prets Report (2008) on media literacy in a digital world, a number of MEPs expressed concern that the report violates the principle of subsidiarity. They emphasised that the design of curricula of media literacy should be the responsibility of member states as they do not consider as desirable a common European media education programme for all children in member states.

Content of media literacy programmes is another area that will be influenced. While, the Commission has publicly stated that 'the modalities of media literacy in school curricula are Member States' primary responsibility (Commission's Recommendation, 2009) it is probable that besides the increased importance that will be given to the subject, there will also be an influence on the content of the media literacy programmes. More emphasis will be given to digital literacy since the EU's interest lies mainly in the economic import of the media, particularly ICTs and the new media, especially the Internet. Even paragraph 2 of the Commission's Communication (2007) which refers to 'all media' gives more importance to the new media. The Lisbon Agenda (2000); Parliament's Resolution (2008) and the Recommendation of Parliament and Council (2006) have more references to the new media than to traditional media. The Lisbon Agenda (2000), furthermore, set 2002 as the date by which all teachers should be skilled in the use of the Internet, however, there is no target date specifying when teachers should be literate in other media. It is

now up to educators to yield the educational benefits that can arise by the convergence of programmes of media literacy with programmes of digital literacy.

The third area of influence that can be exerted by the EU documents is teacher training. In the last twenty-five years teacher training has been considered as essential for the success of media literacy programmes (Grunwald, 1982; Paris Agenda, 2007). This notwithstanding, teacher training is still not adequate in several EU member states (Lauri et al. 2010). Parliament's Resolution (2008) recommends that compulsory media education modules be incorporated into teacher training for all school levels and that teachers of all subjects and at every type of school should be familiarised with the issues related to media education. This emphasis on teacher training in EU policy documents could lead to improvement in an area that is essential for the proper teaching of the subject.

Concluding remark

While in media policies on the international level there is a hiatus between the content dimension and the technical, administrative and economic dimensions, the EU's adoption of a media education policy shows that such a hiatus is neither necessary nor desirable especially in is a culture marked by media convergence and globalisation. Such a culture brings with it the need to adopt convergent media policies on the international level whereby the content aspects are catered for together with the economic, administrative and technical aspects. Furthermore research on media policies has to be inspired by a holistic ethos. The aspects just mentioned are weaved together and have to be studied and reflected upon simultaneously. Such an attitude leads to digital dynamics rather than digital divided (Frau-Meigs & Torrent, 2009). Only a collective effort by the different stakeholders can create the required impetus to ascertain that the citizens of the digital era will be media literate enough to become full and active citizens as well as empowered media users.

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Science Literacy and Media Literacy: a Missing Link?

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Keywords: media literacy; science in the news; cross-curricular collaboration; media learning

Abstract

The study of science in the media is increasingly highlighted within science programmes and represents an authentic context for interdisciplinary collaboration. Yet the literature on 'media across the curriculum' makes surprisingly little mention of links to science and cross-curricular approaches to teaching about and with science-based media resources is an area that is under-explored.

This research study focuses on science in the news. The project involved 28 teachers from seven schools and brought together science and English teachers to explore collaborative working with the aim of promoting critical engagement with media reports with a science component.

Teachers planned, developed and implemented a school-based activity with an emphasis on 'connected learning' rather than the compartmentalised learning that tends to accompany the discrete treatment of science matters in science class and media matters in English class.

Not only did the project raise teachers' awareness of science in the media as a potential, purposeful and profitable area for collaborative working, but it demonstrated how the synergy of the different experiences and expertise of Science and English teachers produced very varied approaches to a programme of activities with an enhanced capacity to promote criticality in relation to science literacy and media literacy.

A cross-curricular approach

The new Curriculum in Northern Ireland is strongly committed to cross-curricularity (CCEA, 2003) and greater integration across disciplines is now favoured. Schools are required to promote generic skills that feature in learning across all subjects, and offer 'thematic learning,' where different disciplines contribute to programmes of study. However, collaborative work between subject departments can be superficial, failing to

truly integrate the collaborating subjects at the level of content and discourse.

Science in the media provides an authentic context for cross-curricular collaboration. It addresses the concerns of both science and English teachers and is neutral ground on which the subjects meet, each with their own strengths and each with something to learn from the other. Collaborative work in this area can avoid duplication while promoting consolidation by encouraging pupils to transfer learning. In addition, in a climate of ever-increasing teacher workloads it can, unlike many initiatives, reduce rather than increase the burden on teachers.

Science in the media

Increasingly science-based news reports have a role in the science classroom, (Jarman and McClune, 2002, 2004; Kachan et al., 2006) and these developments can be traced to curricular initiatives in both North America and the United Kingdom, which identified a role for science-based media in promoting scientific literacy (American Association for the Advancement of Science, 1993; National Research Council, 1996; Millar and Osborne, 1998).

Foundational work on reading popular reports of science (Norris and Phillips, 1994) was influential in bringing together a concern for science communication with an understanding of reading and interpretation in the context of news reports and in particular print media. This in turn generated further empirical studies (Korpan, 1997; Norris et al., 2003; Ratcliffe, 1999) and critical review (Wellington and Osbourne, 2001; Yore et al., 2004), in relation to critical understanding of science in the media. They acknowledge earlier work (Jenkins, 1992; Mallow, 1991) that addressed the issue of reading and scientific literacy and drew attention to the importance and also the challenges of media contexts for science education. In addition, the role of prior beliefs and the impact they have on comprehension (Schoenfeld, 1983; Schommer, 1989) was an underlying strand of influential research.

Sometimes news reports are used to promote science subject knowledge, to signal the relevance of school science topics or to highlight socio-scientific issues (Jarman and McClune, 2007; Hilkia and Mantzouridis, 2005; Ratcliffe and Grace, 2003; Korpan et al., 1997). However, previous studies suggest that science teachers on the whole do not systematically address issues relating to critical engagement with science-based news. They support the view that, in general, science education does not adequately prepare young people to engage critically with science-based news. Recent studies involving science communicators, science educators, media educators and journalists (McClune and Jarman, 2010a, 2010b) have identified conceptual issues which underpin science teaching with media sources and provide a model to inform professional development and influence classroom practice in this area which is currently underrated.

On the other hand, knowledge and understanding in relation to the media are widely accepted as forming one strand of the subject English. English teachers are familiar with strategies for writing in the genre of newspaper reporting, for distinguishing between fact and opinion, and for analysing the components of a news article. The purpose of such media-based activity is to develop pupils' 'critical literacy in relation to texts they encounter in their daily lives, be they printed, televisual or electronic' (Davison and Dowson, 1998: 165). Nevertheless, as Mark Pike points out, 'the teaching of the media within English can be done badly, if it fails to focus on interpretation and neglects to foster cultural and social understanding' (Pike, 2004: 122).

Popular science

Writing from the perspective of a science journalist (Sellah, 2001) explores media reporting of popular science. She acknowledges the constraints and dilemmas of the journalist but suggests how these limitations might be used to promote scientific and media literacy.

Jarman and McClune (2007: 18) explore this idea further. Popular science reported in the media is not necessarily what the science community might regard as important, rather it will have been selected on the basis of news values. Hence when the *Daily Mail* announces its Frankenstein Food Watch (2004) or we read headlines that assert:

Scientists have found the secret of eternal youth (*Independent*, 2000)

Eating chocolate 'as good for your heart as 30 minutes exercise (*Daily Telegraph*, 2010)

or warn of:

Space rock 'on collision course (BBC News, 2002)

or report the outcomes of scientific endeavour in term of relief or hope:

Success! The world hasn't ended (*The Sun*, 2008)

Could tiny golden bullets kill cancer? (*Daily Mail*, 2011)

…. we are witnessing the results of a complex interaction between competing news values and other interests and ideas that propel science stories into the news. These headlines reveal important aspects of popular science reporting. When *The Sun* reported that the world had not ended following the start-up of the Large Hadron Collider in CERN in 2008 they were reporting on groundbreaking experimental work. This is science in the making, which, is provisional and often contested. Science in the media does not enjoy the certainty of science in the textbook.

Nor does popular science reflect the balance of science enquiry; it often has an orientation to biological science, reporting on health issues and medical breakthroughs. The awe and wonder of science is often reported in the context of astronomy and space

science rather than the routine of the laboratory. In the popular press science is sometimes co-opted into general news stories so that when an earthquake off the coast of Japan in 2011 severely damaged a nuclear reactor, nuclear physics became a news story. A similar event in 2004 off the coast of India introduced 'tsunami' into the vocabulary and the science of earthquakes and plate tectonics was widely reported.

Media literacy

These perspectives on media literacy from the curricular subjects of science and English stress the importance of critical analysis. Henry Jenkins defines the new media literacies as 'a set of cultural competencies and social skills that young people need in the new media landscape' and goes on to say that 'these skills build on the foundation of traditional literacy, research skills, technical skills, and critical analysis skills taught in the classroom' (Jenkins et al., 2006:4). It can be all too easy to get caught up in the new literacies to the neglect of these foundational skills. Jenkins spells out what the critical analysis skills are: 'Once students enter cyberspace…they need skills in evaluating the quality of different sources, how perspectives and interests can color representations, and the likely mechanisms by which misinformation is perpetuated or corrected' (Jenkins et al., 2006: 44). David Buckingham exemplifies some critical analysis skills relating to science in the media: '…coming to understand the selection and the choices made in the presentation of scientific findings in a programme such as *Tomorrow's World*, for example, may raise questions for the students about the selection and presentation of evidence in science as a whole, and about the language and status of all empirical endeavour' (Buckingham, 1990: 172-173). Awareness of commonalities such as these led the researchers to the selection of media literacy as a suitable topic to link Science and English collaboratively, as it has relevance to the curriculum of each subject.

Research questions

This study replicates and extends previous work carried out by the research team with trainee teachers of Science and English (Alexander et al., 2008). Findings from that study showed that their subject background was an indicator of the nature of the critical response they would make to science-based news reports. This study sought to determine the extent of any similarity between trainee and experienced teachers and explore how experienced teachers might approach the challenge of collaborative work and what would be the nature of the tasks that they produced in response to the opportunities provided by bringing media-based science reports into science and English lessons.

The study addressed two key questions:

- Are the responses of experienced teachers to critical literacy issues subject-dependent?
- Are teachers' personal and pedagogical responses to critical literacy influenced by their exposure to a programme of interdisciplinary teaching and learning?

The intervention and observations

A one-day workshop, which we called 'Meet the Neighbours,' was an opportunity for 28 Science and English teachers from 7 schools to work together on a number of science-media tasks. The workshop activities were designed firstly to encourage teachers to explore their personal capability by completing critical reading tasks with science-based news and in particular to highlight any disciplinary basis of different approaches of science and English teachers. Secondly the workshop introduced resources to support critical reading of science-based media reports, highlighted key aspects of a collaborative media-based project, and modeled joint working by encouraging teachers to identify potential for collaborative work in Science and English and prepare materials targeted at specific elements in their existing programmes. To consolidate the experience, and to chart progression, teachers were asked to engage with critical reading tasks that mirrored those used to introduce the event and to reflect on any changes in their own perspective.

Analysis of initial responses from Science teachers and English teachers demonstrated a degree of subject bias in their critical response which was similar to that made by trainee teachers (Alexander et al., 2008). Scrutiny of post-intervention responses to critical reading tasks found some differences in the nature of critical responses from the teachers. In each case there was an observable shift away from a typical Science teacher's response, with a focus on factual content and scientific method and the typical English teacher's response, characterized by an emphasis on language and literary devices, to a more balanced response with each group adopting some of the characteristic responses of the other. Indeed it was notable that in their eagerness to embrace some element of their counterparts' approach to critical reading most teachers discarded some of the critical elements that they had previously included. Consequently, in this study the overall level of critical comment remained largely constant before and after the intervention but the type of comment from Science and English teachers was moderated by the experience of cross-curricular working. It would appear that following collaborative working teachers demonstrated the willingness to look beyond the perspective that their subject orientation might dictate. By providing a framework of 'always ask' questions we appear to assist them in forming a systematic response to media articles. The nature and causes of changes to critical reading is complex and the subject of an ongoing study.

The intervention was based on model and framework which would stimulate and support collaborative work in school (Jarman and McClune, 2007:179, McClune and Jarman, 2010a).

This project was intended to be a first step in a collaborative school-based initiative where Science and English departments together identified a potential area of collaborative working and outlined plans including time-scales for what in most cases were expected to be pilot projects illustrating collaborative classroom work based around science-related news reports.

Anticipated pedagogical outcomes

At the end of the 'Meet the Neighbours' day's programme, all seven schools had produced a plan of the collaborative work that they intended to implement before the end of the school term. All of the teachers participated enthusiastically and had devised detailed lesson outlines, which in almost all cases were followed through fairly closely. Table 1 provides a summary of these school programmes. In one school staff illness prevented teachers carrying out the planned lesson programme. The remaining six schools devised and delivered programmes which can be divided into three types according to their format – a 'collapsed timetable' day; collaborative work embedded into the regular school timetable; a mixed programme containing elements of both of these.

The teachers' initial journeys into collaborative working with colleagues from the science or English department are reported along with the learning experiences that they used to help pupils connect their learning. In subsequent visits researchers observed these programmes in action. A detailed analysis is beyond the scope of this study as this work is the subject of ongoing research. However, tentative findings are included with this account.

Topic / Activity	Teaching strategy & Resources	Intended pupil output
'Vanishing Bees' / Existing timetabled programme	Visiting expert - scientist Video School VLE	News article (print)
Radiation risks from mobile phones / Collapsed timetable	Class teaching Guided reading Science-related News report Video	Media text (Comic live) Podcast or Video
Gold prospecting (local story) / Collapsed timetable	Visiting experts – scientist & Journalist Class teaching	News article (print)
Food additives / Normal timetable new programme	Class teaching – Analysis of science-related news Video Internet	Podcast (News analysis) Poster presentation
Food and health / Normal timetable new programme	Team teaching – Focus on critical evaluation Discussion Science practical tasks	Media package in style of a teen-magazine Scripted role-play of a chat show
Investigative science / Existing timetabled programme	Science practical tasks Science-related news articles	News report of a science experiment
Science-related product description/ Mixed programme. Fixed and collapsed timetable	Critical analysis tasks (active learning) Science-related news articles (Print and Video)	Science based product advertising

Table 1. Summary of school programmes.

'Collapsed timetable' day

Two schools adopted this approach. One brought all their first year pupils together for a whole day. In this school researchers observed a genuine working together of Science and English staff and the pupils were engrossed in working to the deadline to produce their media text. Feedback from both staff and pupils was very positive. As one absorbed pupil said: 'It's like we were the only pupils in the school today!'

The second school followed a similar format with all its third year pupils. The topic they chose was a local one on whether there was gold in a nearby lake. The teachers reported that they were pleased by the learning ethos during the day, by the teamwork by groups not used to working together, by the participation from weaker pupils in the mixed

ability context and by the frequent focus on local environmental issues.

Embedded

Two schools embedded their collaborative Science and English media project in the normal timetable. The first school built the programme into two weeks of English and Science lessons with second year classes, with a team-teaching lesson at the end of each week. The pupils watched a video and did Internet research on the topic of food additives. They learned how to analyse a news article and produced a poster comparing two news articles. They then had to produce a handout and a scripted podcast on what to look for in a science news article, thus demonstrating critical awareness.

The second school planned a sequence of twenty lessons involving both Science and English timetabled classes. Stimulus discussion of the topic in English was matched by experimentation in Science on whether chocolate affects heart-rate. Finally the pupils had to produce a teen magazine style media package which could include newspaper, radio or TV. A debate in role-play chat-show style was held on whether additives should be removed from food. In discussion with researchers with pupils singled out this latter form of learning task as particularly 'useful' and 'enjoyable'.

Mixed

One school left it to teachers to try out a variety of activities in their classes. Experiments on Hooke's Law and energy content in crisps followed by a scientific write-up and then a media-based report in the form of a news article were planned. We are not entirely sure how grounded this work was in critical reading of science-based media articles and, although there was an element of cross-curricular working between Science and English teachers, we are not sure whether this was an inherent aspect of their activity. The Head of Science is keen to incorporate media literacy in this form into the KS3 curriculum and he has continued to explore other approaches, for example, he has read news reports on the dangers of mobile phones with a class and intends to have another class produce a podcast. Despite the diligence evident in this school's response, key features of the project's approach have dissipated, as the Head of Science acknowledges in his reflections: 'My overall thoughts were mainly positive...The students got greater access to ICT facilities and improved their skills in this area...I will make time to hold collaborative meetings with the Science department and English department to ensure consistency and uniformity in the approach. It would be easier to settle on one format and have the whole department adhere to it.'

The second school carried through a programme of collaborative work during a week of Science and English lessons and then during a 'collapsed timetable' morning. The work was based on careful study of science-related news articles and the pupils had to list science articles they had read during the week. The pupils thought about what makes good science and what makes a good news article. With this preparatory analytical work in place, the dedicated morning was used for active learning. The pupils wrote labels for shampoo bottles with information about additives and then role-played video-ed advertisements showing the underlying science.

In feedback to researchers both staff and pupils believed that the pupils were more aware and discriminating and that their critical literacy skills had been sharpened. The pupils wrote evaluations of this programme on 'science in the media':

'I think we should get more classes like these – common-sense classes that we may need in everyday life in future.'

'Before doing this study in class I would have just read the titles in the newspapers and I would have believed what they said. Now I'm more keen to read the real story and see if there is evidence to back up the title.'

Discussion

The experience of working in a collaborative learning environment would appear to modify the subject-specific perspectives on critical responses which teachers bring to a critical reading task. It indicates a heightened level of awareness, and an appreciation of a more comprehensive view of criticality in the context of science-based news. However, the extent to which this may be sustained in other contexts is beyond the scope of this study. General observations about the implementation of this 'Meet the Neighbours' project in schools are:

- The response of both staff and pupils was highly positive. Staff regarded this as a valuable activity. They enjoyed the cross-curricular work with colleagues with whom they would not normally collaborate. They were able to contribute to the series of lessons from their respective strengths in their subject-knowledge. They also had combined experience to know what would work with their pupils and fit in with their curriculum. It was striking how during the initial full day programme they were able to devise a full plan for the lessons they would then try out back in school and also that in all cases there was little deviation from these plans. Pupils were enthusiastic about activities that had a certain novelty in their cross-curricular aspect and that they could see gave both Science and English relevance to daily life.

- It was notable that all schools carried the activities much more into a multi-modal environment than we had anticipated. Our limited expectations arose from two main sources. First, this was innovative work for the science classes especially and so we thought that they would 'play it safe' by sticking close to the newspaper print media through which the topic had been initially taught. Furthermore, and related to this, the chosen context for science in the news was newspaper articles. On reflection it is not so surprising that both staff and pupils regarded this as a constraint and found ways to move to a range of communication media – podcasts, video, comic strips, etc. This is an indicator of how familiar young people are with the style of multi-modal media; this project aimed to enhance their understanding of their content.

- The question arises as to whether the embedded or 'collapsed timetable' format was preferable. While there are advantages for efficient management in a 'collapsed timetable' day, there is a danger that its benefits may be superficial. We would favour the embedding of a programme such as this within the regular curriculum, with science and English teachers collaborating fully in its connected and coherent integration into the work in Science and English classrooms.

- The aspect of critical literacy that this project was particularly aiming to address was critical *reading*. However the major pupil activities in all the schools moved the focus from process to product since they involved creating or writing a media report. The seductive attraction of the media context and the creativity it invited tended to divert attention from the exercise of discrimination and criticality. The way the project was implemented in the schools may have been a necessary first step in interesting pupils in, and familiarising them with, science-based media articles but this needs to be taken further so that they become discerning as regular receivers of scientific news, often at the level of 'popular science.' Science teachers are well versed in the importance of accuracy, verifiability and reliability in their subject but less so in training pupils to apply these measures to science in the news. English teachers are skilled in deconstructing the style of media articles to show how they impact upon the reader but this is often at the expense of paying full attention to what the article is about: 'how' becomes more important than 'what.' Putting critical literacy into practice, for both pupils and staff, is therefore more complex than might first appear but in a media-centred and information-rich society it is an essential skill Science and English can get somewhere together that neither could get to on its own. To achieve this, however, it

will be necessary to find ways to focus the attention and activity of pupils on process without product taking over.

Next steps

The outcomes of this study are encouraging but perhaps highlight the need for additional structured support for teachers in order to move beyond the introduction of event-based taster news-based activities towards an embedded culture or ethos of preparing pupils for critical engagement with science-based news.

To that end, recently published work in this area (McClune and Jarman, 2010a) that sought to bring together experts from science education, media education, science communication and journalism to identify key elements that might underpin critical engagement with science in the media, might be helpful. This foundational work was followed by a study grounded in the classroom experience of teachers in which learning outcomes, graded according to perceived level of difficulty and categorised in line with traditional curricular areas, were identified (McClune and Jarman, 2010b).

The outcome of these studies could form the basis of a programme of school-based collaborative work by providing teachers across departments with a template and checklist against which to audit current practice and develop new strategies and classroom programmes. Guidance on effective collaborative work may also be needed. Teachers in the course of a busy school programme, in addition to the exhortation to work together which is inherent in curricular initiatives and the context which science-based news reporting may provide, may require support in selecting and maximising the opportunities provided by different approaches to collaborative working. This may take the form of description of the types of collaborative structures that allow for different degrees of interdependence. In discussing cross-curricular collaboration in the context of science-based media Jarman and McClune (2007: 164) identified four distinct collaborative approaches – consultative, cooperative, coordinated and coincident - which they illustrated by analysis of exemplar materials similar to those provided in this paper.

A critical perspective on the media has been identified as a central concern of media education (Buckingham et al., 2005) while young people's lack of critical literacy skills has been noted (Facer et al., 2003). For Jenkins et al (2006), 'judgment – the ability to evaluate the reliability and credibility of different information sources' is a core skill in a participatory culture, and in a follow-up section titled 'what might be done?' they enumerate five methods by which this skill can be taught. Another such method could be the one that has been described in this paper. As Science teachers and English teachers strive towards goals of science literacy and media literacy, this study demonstrates that

there are authentic links which, when capitalised on in collaborative working, promote media learning.

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Inspecting Creativity: Making the Abstract Visible

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Keywords: creativity; policy; education; discourse

Abstract

Media education has an uneasy relationship with the rhetorics of creativity, which are explored in this article.

In *Learning: Creative Approaches that Raise Standards* (OFSTED, 2010), creativity is operationalised. That is, as Marcuse (1972) tells us, the concept is made synonymous with a corresponding set of operations.

The document takes the form of a 'survey', but its status as an Ofsted publication means that it is unlikely to be read merely as a neutral set of observations. It is more likely that this will be read as a set of guidelines for good practice – practice which, if adopted, is likely to lead to a favourable Ofsted grade in the future. In this sense the document operates, in a Foucaultian sense, as a discursive statement – it is regulatory, administrative and 'limiting'.

Ostensibly drawing upon a version of creativity produced, reified and reinforced by three other education policy documents (*All Our Futures* (1999), *Creativity: Find it, promote it* (QCA, 2004) and *Nurturing Creativity in Young People* (2006)) the Ofsted survey creates an illusion of continuity and coherence. It is, however, determined by the requirement for creativity to be amenable to inspection and, therefore, the concept is rendered unambiguous, unified and *visible*.

By examining the rhetorical strategies employed in this document, and by starting with a rejection of the notion that 'creativity' is a 'thing' with essential qualities, it is possible to identify contradictions and tensions in this particular production of knowledge and 'truth'.

I suggest that such an approach, which borrows a philosophical stance from Foucault and specific tools of analysis from Fairclough, is necessary if we are to understand creativity as a concept that is always, already socially and historically constructed, rather than something which can be identified, implemented and assessed.

Introduction and definitions

I'd like to start this article by suggesting something provocative to / for media educators: that there is no such thing as creativity. This is a statement that is both radical and reactionary; radical because it challenges common sense, and reactionary because it is resistant to the promises that creativity is an enriching force for good. But I suggest that creativity is not a 'thing' that can be discovered, analysed and measured, it is a concept and, as such, it is a product of language and social practice. Creativity is a concept with a history, but it tends to be used in an a-historical way, as if it has the status of something universal and transcendental like 'good', 'evil' and 'love'. It is this implicit disavowal of its dependence upon specific cultural and historical conditions for its meaning(s) that constitutes some of the implicit theorising of creativity. A rejection of the notion of an 'essence' of creativity, therefore, liberates us from its seductions; an endorsement of such a rejection can be found in Foucault's discussion of Nietzsche:

> Why does Nietzsche challenge the pursuit of the origin…? First, because it is an attempt to capture the exact essence of things, their purest possibilities, and their carefully protected identities, because this search assumes the existence of immobile forms that precede the external world of accident and succession. (Foucault, 1977: 142)

If we, similarly, refuse to take for granted the 'carefully protected identity' of creativity we can develop a sensitivity to the way in which it is always 'produced' and never merely 'registered'.

Historiography rather than historiometry

The methodological approach I am advocating here can be distinguished from much of the vast quantity of creativity research through this opposition: historiography focuses on the processes by which 'knowledge' about creativity is produced, whereas historiometry treats historical instances of 'creativity' as self-evident and as if they possess explanatory power. I suggest that most creativity research is always, already historiometric, even psychological and neuroscientific work, because it is inevitably informed by culturally formed, value-laden notions of how 'creativity' might be manifested. Simonton, an advocate of historiometry, tries to persuade us that:

> Historiometric samples contain personalities who have 'made history' in an important domain of human achievement. In the particular case of creativity, historiometric researchers will study those individuals who have some claim to the epithet 'creative genius. (Simonton, 1999: 117)

He concludes that historiometry has unique value in the field of creativity research:

> The most obvious of these assets, of course, is the ability to engage in the scientific study of creativity in its most stellar form. The subjects of historiometic inquiries are undoubted exemplars of creative genius. (Simonton, 1999: 125)

The rhetorical insistence on genius and the 'undoubted' evidence of creativity in such exemplars may seem crude – especially when placed in this critical context – but this is a persistent starting point for much notionally scientific and pedagogic research in this area; to simplify Simonton's argument, those who have "made history" in a 'creative' field must possess essential qualities of 'creativity' and, therefore, by studying such people we can reveal creativity's secrets. This elides any distinction between history and psychology and has produced explanations of creativity ranging from Storr's Freudian aetiology (1972) to Csikszentmihalyi's 'systems' theory (1996) (which, although it nods to social practice, is still rooted in the attributes of Nobel Prize winners).

In contrast, historiography in this context means examining the ways in which particular 'stories' about creativity have been constructed. Nelson, for example, examining the concept of creativity in the Enlightenment period, argues that:

> The emergent discourse also needs to be understood as a product of the new system of the arts arising in the eighteenth century, with its now familiar dualities of art/craft, aesthetic/purpose, genius/talent, creative/mechanical… (Nelson, 2010: 66)

History for the historiographer of creativity is not, therefore, about showing how understanding of creativity became increasingly sophisticated through scientific and philosophical progress, but about showing how the concept of creativity has been produced in particular ways, and has been dependent upon specific historical conditions and social actors.

The analysis offered here, of a particular Ofsted document, is an attempt to show how it tells a particular 'story' about creativity, how it models a slippery concept though rhetorical devices and how it authorises certain forms of 'knowing' over others. As such, the analysis

constitutes an example of an alternative approach to creativity research, influenced by, for example, Gibson (2005), Banaji et al. (2006) and Neelands and Choe (2010).

The power of policy

In this paper I examine how a recent policy document, explicitly concerned with creativity, activates statements from three previous policy documents, represses other statements and, through its exemplification of good practice, produces a material dimension which consolidates a discourse of creativity. Jeffrey and Troman argue that texts such as this

> …are written documents but they also contain values through specific discourses mediated by language and beliefs about the role of education in society and the economy. These discourses bring objects into being…and they construct particular types of social relation through the relative strength of the practices they determine. (Jeffrey and Troman, 2009: 5)

Ofsted, the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills, is the government department charged with improving standards in education in England. It does this, primarily, through the regular inspection of schools, colleges and Local Education Authorities. (Ofsted 2010b) As such, it has authority and power through its regulatory, standardising operations of inspecting and grading schools and colleges, and its document *Learning: Creative Approaches that Raise Standards* is an instrument of this. I suggest that the document models a particular version of creativity that is determined by its amenability to inspection. Moreover, the strategies that it uses to maintain this model reveal tensions between it and other models of creativity which, through necessity, it draws upon.

A 'prescriptive survey'

This document takes the form of a 'survey', but its status as an Ofsted document means that it is unlikely to be read merely as a neutral set of observations. It is more likely that this will be read as a set of guidelines for good practice – practice which, if adopted, is likely to lead to a favourable Ofsted grade in the future. In this sense the document operates, in a Foucaultian (2002) sense, as a discursive statement – it is regulatory, administrative and 'limiting'. The link between creativity and 'good inspection grades' is explicit from the outset:

> All the schools selected for the survey had been judged good or outstanding in their most recent inspection in terms of their pupils' enjoyment of learning, their

preparation for future economic well-being and the curriculum. (Ofsted, 2010a: 1)

The suggestion is that this document contains good practices that, if adopted, could lead to 'good' and 'outstanding' grades. These good practices have been labelled 'creative approaches'. This equation is reinforced in the contents section where the term becomes 'creative learning':

Design for creative learning: the curriculum
Creative learning: higher standards
Creative learning: personal development
Creative learning: effective teaching
Technical skills to support creative learning
Creative approaches to learning and assessment.
(Ofsted 2010a: 2)

Jeffrey and Troman's research, in a primary education context, suggests that the nexus between 'standards' (they use the term 'performativity discourse' to describe the emphasis on targets and attainment) and creativity is a particularly awkward one in the schools included in their ethnographic research. This has resulted in some teachers negotiating the risks by implementing a 'cautious creativity' – "Teaching creatively was the preferred form over teaching for creativity" (Jeffrey and Troman, 2009: 29). The Ofsted document's production of a creativity discourse in which there is *no* contradiction between standards and creativity is, therefore, significant and attention to the construction of (or effacement of) the boundary in this liminal area is revealing. My reading of this document emphasises the following:

- The tension between 'creative learning' and the National Curriculum;
- The reification of the abstract concept 'creativity' into specific tasks and activities;
- The translation of 'creative' activities into 'standards';
- The way in which a notion of creativity inflects the conception of the relationship between teaching and learning.

It is important, for the purposes of this analysis, not to anticipate or pre-judge a particular version of creativity, but to attempt to identify the discursive influences – the existing concepts and documents, the institutional determinants and the notional social/pedagogic practice which may result – all of which cause this document to be 'diaologic', despite its overt 'monologism'. The evidence of such dynamics can reveal the tenuous and

contingent nature of the authority that is produced by the document and how creativity, specifically, operates as a problematic term for it. Foucault argues (about 'the book') that:

> …its unity is variable and relative. As soon as one questions that unity, it loses its self-evidence; it indicates itself, constructs itself, only on the basis of a complex field of discourse. (Foucault, 2002:26)

It is similarly necessary to question the 'unity' of the concept of creativity here and to reveal its dependence upon a field of discourse which includes the authority of policy, the exigencies of inspection and educational rhetoric.

The overt aim of this document is to demonstrate how 'creativity' can complement the National Curriculum and how particular 'creative' teaching and learning activities can improve 'standards', but this is also a work of classification, definition and authorisation, and *these* functions are implicit, rather than explicit. As Fairclough argues in relation to a different document, its "assertions are 'categorical' in the sense that they are not modalized" (Fairclough 2003: 43). In other words, the statements in this document are not qualified by linguistic modifiers, such as 'may' or 'could', but make unqualified assertions. So, for example, we read that

> A greater emphasis on pupils' independence as creative learners did not imply any lessening of rigour; challenging topics were explored in creative ways. (Ofsted, 2010a: 14)

The status of the institution, its regulatory power and its rhetorical strategies all contribute to the authority of such statements. The notion of the 'creative learner' is not problematised at all, but a given; there clearly *is* such as a thing as a 'creative learner' which can be produced through the facilitation of more independence. But, I would argue, creativity continues to be a problematic term given its polymorphous polysemy and, therefore, represents an ever-present threat to the pedagogic project into which it has been 'press-ganged' in this document.

'Creativity', then, provides us with a loose thread, which enables us to untie this particular text; when particular activities are described in this context they are automatically legitimated as 'creative' and, if adopted by schools and colleges, they will undoubtedly be categorised thus in inspection reports. But the translation into practice is not as coherent or seamless as is implied.

Defining creativity

> Inspectors found that the term 'creativity' was subject to a variety of interpretations and applications. Teachers were seen to promote creative learning most purposefully and effectively when encouraging pupils to question and challenge, make connections and see relationships, speculate, keep options open while pursuing a line of enquiry, and reflect critically on ideas, actions and results. (Ofsted, 2010a: 5-6)

Here we can observe a strategy which Fairclough has called "producing an impression of consensus through generalising away form specific evaluations or statements in a way which reduces difference" (Fairclough 2003: 51). The 'variety of interpretations and applications' are undermined implicitly by the statement in the following sentence that the most purposeful promotion of creative learning is characterised by (defined by, perhaps) the encouragement of a specific set of activities. These activities are not traditionally 'arts-based' so the statement simultaneously enlarges the field within which 'creative learning' might take place, and narrows it into a set of *observable* operations. The concept of observability is crucial here, and evident in the statement "Teachers were seen to promote creative learning…" (Ofsted, 2010: 5; my italics). Later we read that:

> During the survey visit, observations of lessons and scrutiny of the students' work confirmed that creative styles of learning kept them focused on tasks, interested and eager to succeed in all subjects across the curriculum. (Ofsted, 2010: 17)

Such a confident assertion of cause and effect, despite the absence anywhere in the document of methodological considerations, has the effect of truth. Creativity, then is translated into specific activities which can be observed and then graded. In an earlier document, *Creativity: find it, promote it* (QCA, 2004), there is a similar modelling of creativity which depends upon observable evidence; students can be *observed* to be thinking and behaving creatively and the same presupposition obtains here. But given Ofsted's role as a regulator of institutions, there is an additional layer of observation involved here – the observation of teachers. So creativity is not merely something that students do, it is something that teachers and schools must demonstrate through the implementation of specific strategies and activities which are amenable to a superior observer in the hierarchy – the inspector.

There is further evidence of this strategy:

> The survey found that the term 'creativity' was widely used in the schools surveyed but there were variations in what was meant, ranging from an innate attribute to an approach and set of skills that could be cultivated. All the schools initially offered examples of 'creativity' in subjects commonly thought of as intrinsically creative, such as the visual and performing arts. However, when the inspectors asked about 'creative ways of learning', examples were offered from most subjects across the curriculum. Teachers and senior leaders most confidently identified and evaluated creativity as an aspect of learning when it was translated into specific activities such as those set out by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority's publication *Creativity: find it, promote it*, rather than expressed as an abstract idea. Creative learning was widely understood to be characterised by:
>
> - questioning and challenging
> - making connections and seeing relationships
> - envisaging what might be
> - exploring ideas, keeping options open
> - reflecting critically on ideas, actions and outcomes.
>
> (Ofsted, 2010a: 8)

It is clearer here that the document is performing an act of classification; again we have a reference to a generalised population of educators who seem to express confusion about the nature of creativity, even revealing their (implied) naivety in focusing on 'subjects commonly thought of as intrinsically creative, such as the visual and performing arts.' The turning point in the argument – the 'however' moment' – is based on implied consensus: 'teachers and senior leaders' are able 'confidently' to identify and evaluate creativity when it is 'translated into specific activities'. The activities described (prescribed) here are significantly different from the model of creativity in *All Our Futures* (NACCCE, 1999) and *Nurturing Creativity in Young People* (Roberts, 2006), most obviously in the absence from this definition of a focus on an objective. This is a curious omission, given the reference to the QCA document *Creativity: find it, promote it*, in which the 'What is Creativity?' section begins with an explicit reference to the model in *All Our Futures*, adopting the definition of imaginative, purposeful activity directed to achieving an objective (QCA, 2004: 7). But a closer look at the QCA document reveals that a process of operationalising creativity starts here, particularly in its efforts to relate the whole curriculum to the concept, and, in this extract, to the requirement for 'originality':

> But what about work in subjects like science, history and maths? While it would be wonderful for a pupil to be the first person to discover a new scientific principle, this is highly unlikely. Does this mean that pupils can't be creative in these subjects? Not at all. Skilled teachers can help pupils tackle questions, solve problems and have ideas that are new to them. This makes pupils' ideas original, the result of genuinely creative behaviour. (QCA, 2004: 7-8)

We can see here a transition from the abstract to the concrete; the difficult concepts in the NACCCE report, such as 'originality' and 'value' are quickly translated into activities which are demonstrable by pupils and, therefore, more amenable to inspection, if not assessment. The key reference point for the Ofsted document is the QCA document in which the work of translating abstracts into concretes has been done. So it is now possible for Ofsted to draw attention to an authoritative text that has legitimated particular activities and to state that a general population of teachers has embraced and found meaning in these activities, as if they had emerged spontaneously, naturally and inevitably. The legitimacy produced for this knowledge about creativity is effected, we might say, intertextually and through a generalising, unsubstantiated claim about real practices – an assertion via consensus.

The activities described in the Ofsted 'survey' then are not merely illustrative, but prescriptive; by implication they represent not only 'good' practice, but 'creative' practice. Some examples of these will be considered later.

The question of standards

The title of this document indicates that 'creative approaches' are only of value if they lead to an improvement in standards. The standards here are very definitely those enshrined in the National Curriculum and creativity, therefore, becomes something which can be administered in the service of those standards. In a section entitled 'Creative learning: effective teaching', creativity is linked to the *Every Child Matters* agenda; we learn that

> The schools that encouraged creative approaches to learning deliberately set out to promote a variety of ways of thinking and problem solving. The survey judged eight of the 24 nursery and primary schools to be outstanding in boosting pupils' achievement and enjoyment of learning, 15 were good, and one was satisfactory. (Ofsted, 2010a: 22)

A statement which indicates that not only can 'creative approaches' be measured and graded, but that they are not legitimate as creative approaches unless they conform to this assessment regime.

Creativity, however, is not a concept that lends itself to easy definition and which carries with it a range of meanings, many of which are about resistance, opposition and subversion. This document manages this problem by using the authority of QCA's *Creativity: find it, promote it* (2004) to model creativity as, essentially, a set of generic skills, but tension between the regulated order of the National Curriculum and the potential wildness of creativity is ever-present. We read, for example that:

> Good examples of creative styles of learning were embedded successfully within the National Curriculum, both through the presentation of individual subjects and through cross-curricular approaches. (Ofsted 2010a: 4)

And:

> In schools with good teaching, there is not a conflict between the National Curriculum, national standards in core subjects and creative approaches to learning. (Ofsted 2010a: 4)

So the argument is that there is no inherent contradiction, no intrinsic problem with the relationship between the National Curriculum and creativity, in fact it is the index of a good school that creativity has been 'embedded' and pressed into the service of 'core subjects'. The tension here is between the regulated regime of assessment and the absent voice which might propose an alternative model of creativity; it is the tension evident in *All Our Futures* (1999) when dialogue about 'freedom and control' is articulated.

The tension is also clear in the examples of work observed in the survey, which includes 'failures' as well as 'successes'. An example of a failure is described thus:

> A number of year groups had inexperienced staff who did not make the most of enjoyable activities to develop pupils' skills in enquiry, decision-making, inventive problem-solving and self-evaluation. Pupils were, for example, clearly enjoying designing a time machine so they could travel back to meet the Egyptians for their topic work. The impact of this potentially very good activity was limited because the teacher failed to promote any higher order thinking. (Ofsted 2010a: 14)

Creativity (or its applications/manifestations as 'creative learning' and 'creative approaches to learning') is not mentioned here because the absence of the development of 'skills in enquiry, decision-making, inventive problem solving and self-evaluation' means that, in the terms of this document, it does not exist. The example goes on to explain that

> Pupils were not encouraged to evaluate each other's ideas and opportunities were missed to make connections with mathematics and science, even though there were clear opportunities to do so. (Ofsted 2010a: 14)

Which suggests that creativity resides in the activity of teachers; that, in order for 'creative learning' to occur, it must be driven and *promoted* by teachers in the direction of National Curriculum standards. In this sense Ofsted retains the notion of 'purpose' which we first found in *All Our Futures* (NACCCE 1999) and which occurs repeatedly in this document, although not in its 'working definition'. But purpose is always in tension with pleasure/enjoyment and this is rhetorically resolved by combining them. Here, for example:

> The end products were recorded and pupils then evaluated them. They were able to explain the purpose and impact of this activity. It had extended their understanding of pattern and structure, strengthened their recall of multiplication tables and been hugely enjoyable. (Ofsted 2010a: 12)

Assessment versus Inspection

The regulatory work of this document in modelling creativity in such a way that it becomes instrumental in achieving the aims of the National Curriculum is clearest when it assigns validity to particular activities:

> In a small number of the schools visited, pupils' personal development as creative learners was not matched by their progress in core academic skills such as literacy and numeracy. This happened where curriculum planning was not sufficiently well-rooted in the content and skills of the National Curriculum. The acquisition of basic skills remains of fundamental importance. (Ofsted 2010a: 6)

This statement is predicated on the assumptions that

- Personal development as a 'creative learner' is measurable

- This measurement is comparable with measurement of development as a 'traditional learner'

The function of the statement is to caution schools and colleges against simply allowing 'creativity' to flourish without ensuring that it is subordinate to the National Curriculum, but by establishing the notion that creativity is measurable it opens up the possibility of assessing it, formalising it and operationalising it.

The cautionary note is struck again here:

> Pupils made little progress when the outcomes expected were insufficiently challenging and when they received insufficient guidance. Occasionally, teachers failed to grasp that creative learning was not simply a question of allowing pupils to follow their interests; careful planning was needed for enquiry, debate, speculation, experimentation, review and presentation to be productive. (Ofsted 2010: 6)

However, there is a tension, it seems, between assessment and inspection. As Rowntree (1977) suggests, assessment tends to demand objects which can be quantified, transported and contained. But the activities described by Ofsted, particularly given its detachment from the objective focused model in *All Our Futures* (1999), do not inevitably provide such evidence, rather, they provide evidence of primarily cognitive processes. How might we account for this contradiction? One strategy is to suggest that education is not an ideologically coherent institution, but that it is a site of discursive conflict, and that the recent focus on creativity can be used to reveal something of this conflict. The need for urgent 'change', argued for so passionately in *All Our Futures*, may have been driven by the requirements of the knowledge economy, social justice and educational reform, but any actually changes resulting from it directly (minimal, according to Buckingham and Jones, albeit only two years later in 2001) or indirectly, are not inevitably coherent or demonstrably in the service of powerful interests. These examples of political interventions in creativity in education reveal how resistant 'creativity' is to definition and categorisation and how attempts to do this have necessitated a translation into particular practices which may be at odds with existing educational practices. In other words, the process of attempting to sort out the 'mess' of creativity actually results in more 'mess'.

A movement away from conventional interpretations of creativity

The Ofsted document exhibits a desire to construct a definition of creativity that is different from ones which locate it conventionally within the arts:

> Approaches developed successfully in traditionally 'creative' subjects, such as the arts and English, were often incorporated into other areas, such as science and mathematics.' (Ofsted 2010a: 5)

The use of inverted commas here clearly indicates doubt about such a limited conception of creativity and/or a desire to undermine it. No such qualification is implemented when the adjective is used in, for example, 'creative learning' and 'creative approaches', which has the effect of rendering these terms unproblematic and legitimate. There is a drive here (and in its predecessors) to locate creativity across the curriculum, rather than just in the arts (although as Banaji et al. (2006) point out, this is undermined by their visual rhetoric – their tendency to be decorated with photographs of arts-based activities), but the 'working definition' in this document constitutes the most significant move away from anything product-oriented towards a set of cognitive skills:

- questioning and challenging
- making connections and seeing relationships
- envisaging what might be
- exploring ideas, keeping options open
- reflecting critically on ideas, actions and outcomes.

(Ofsted, 2010a: 7-8)

Here, some of Banaji et al.'s final questions become most pertinent:

> What is the difference between 'good' pedagogy and 'creative' pedagogy? How is creative teaching and learning different from 'good or 'effective' teaching and 'engaged' or 'enthusiastic' learning? What is the added value of using the term 'creativity' in this context? (Banaji et al, 2006: 60)

The authors do not propose answers to these questions, but their relevance is clear; arguably there is no *applicable* difference in the Ofsted document between 'creative' and 'good' or 'effective'. This has implications for real teachers in real circumstances; the modelling of 'creative learning' (or the re-framed 'creative approaches to learning') as effective pedagogy legitimates further statements about teachers' competence:

> Pupils' enthusiasm and sense of achievement were shared by almost all staff in the schools visited. In the four primary and four secondary schools where any concern was expressed about creative approaches to learning being a successful preparation

> for external assessments or where pupils' achievement was not in fact enhanced, this reflected teachers' lack of confidence in their ability to combine the two effectively or their limited skills in developing pupils' ability to question, speculate, solve problems and evaluate what they had done. (Ofsted, 2010a: 14)

'Concern' here becomes an index of ineptitude; concern about the efficacy of the approaches described in this document is invalid and is the result of either 'lack of confidence' or 'limited skills'. Again, we might refer to the rhetorical devices used here: the use of '*any* concern' suggests that it is minimal; the reporting of this concern in the passive voice generalises it, distances it from a locatable voice and renders it merely vaguely negative, whereas a quote from an individual might resonate and be disruptive to the flow of establishing consent. It is also worth noting that 'creative approaches to learning' are here wholly identified with "developing pupils' ability to question, speculate, solve problems and evaluate". The reference to teachers' concerns about assessment is also significant; I mentioned earlier that the focus in this document is on observable activities rather than (externally) assessable activities, but any problem with the lack of fit here has been firmly shifted onto the teachers, rather than acknowledging the imperatives of inspection.

Conclusions

Media educators might speculate about the reasons for the use of 'creativity' in this document; we might propose that 'creativity' offers the opportunity to revitalise the familiar with new terminology, or that the document is achieving the necessary goal of appearing to fall in with the 'knowledge economy' agenda whilst hanging on to 'traditional' pedagogic values and practices. But such speculation about motives and origins is less important than identifying the way in which 'creativity' is modelled and remodelled in relation to pedagogy here. To use the concepts of rhetoric, ideology and discourse, we can see that this document employs rhetorical strategies in order to create a persuasive case for particular pedagogical approaches (such as those frequently heralded in / by media education) that it bears the ideological imprint of a government's 'knowledge economy' agenda, but, most importantly, it operates discursively to produce and legitimate particular activities as valid and particular interpretations as 'knowledge'.

One other example illustrates the way in which creativity can be discursively framed to be subordinate to conventional notions of educational standards; in May 2010 a conference was held called 'Creativity in the curriculum'. The flyer for this conference suggests that creativity is a discrete commodity that can be 'embedded' in order positively to influence

a range of self-evidently important things. The subtitle: "Embedding creativity throughout your school to enhance learning and raise pupil performance" reveals that creativity here is merely one (albeit a currently significant one) of a number of rational technologies that can be employed in the school/'factory' (Kendall and Wickham, 1999: 133) in order to generate particular desirable outcomes.

The problem with the construction of creativity in this context is not that it is a 'bad thing' or even a 'mistake', but that it is non-acknowledged thing; there is no suggestion that creativity is subject to different interpretations, no possibility of alternative perspectives, but, instead, a mobilisation of the conceptual translation performed by Ofsted and, indeed, endorsed by the presence of Patricia Metham, referred to here as the "author of the report *Learning: creative approaches that raise standards*, to give you an exclusive insight into how creativity will be assessed in the new Ofsted framework so you can prepare for inspection." (Creativity in the Curriculum, 2010)

'Creativity' is constructed by Ofsted as a thing with unity that can be observed and assessed; Ofsted has, therefore, constructed a 'truth' about creativity – a fusion of power and knowledge. But if media educators are prepared to acknowledge that 'creativity' is not a 'thing', but rather a site of conflict where different definitions and interests compete, we are less likely to accept it as a useful assessment term or something that can be measured and rationalised. We might also be resistant to its incorporation and implementation as part of an inspection process, however seductive and authoritative the rhetoric.

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Lessons from a Media Literacy Experiment: Challenging the School Culture in Brazil

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Keywords: media learning, Brazilian education, teachers' training, multimodality

Abstract

We report results of a two-year experience on media literacy education in the State of São Paulo, Brazil. We developed teaching materials that merge techniques of media production and cultural reflection into classroom activities and used them to conduct 20 workshops for teachers and pupils of secondary schools. Our goals were to investigate how teachers and students learn about media, and which would be the most appropriated methods to promote media literacy, considering the particularities of the Brazilian school and media culture, and the international media literacy paradigms. The workshops applied multimodal pedagogy, using cinema trailers, textual analyses, infographics, comic strips, storyboards, photography, advertising, and media diaries. Results suggest that both teachers and students are strongly motivated about media learning, because they recognise the centrality of the media in their lives. Teachers think that students are very smart but naive when using media, and students think that teachers are very conservative to accept media education (and its pedagogy) as a school topic. Both teachers and students seem to be able to understand and apply key concepts when analysing media texts, although students demonstrate to be more creative when producing audiovisual content, but have great difficulties when asked to reflect and particularly to write about their choices. We concluded that media literacy education challenges the Brazilian school culture and the authority of teachers, and that a priority in teachers training should be to encourage the reflection on how the media language brings new ways of framing the relationship between teachers and learners.

Media literacy in Brazil

Issues of media literacy education have been explored in the Brazilian educational field since the beginning of the twentieth century. In 1932, a group of 26 intellectuals, artists and liberal politicians signed the 'Manifest of Pioneers of the New Education', in which

they defended the creation of public, free and high quality schools for the whole of Brazilian society, according to social, technological and cultural changes which the country was facing (Lopes, 2009). The document points out the press, discs, movies and radio as 'formidable resources' to advance education and culture, 'considering the conditions of the geography and extension of the country's territory'.

In 1934, the Rio de Janeiro Radio School was founded by Roquette-Pinto de Macedo (Roquette Pinto, 2002-2003), who was known in Brazil for advocating ideas akin to those held by the founder of the British Broadcasting Corporation, John Reith, on the democratic role of broadcasting. In 1910, Roquette-Pinto also founded a film library in the National Museum of Rio de Janeiro which became the first Brazilian initiative to value movies in education.

According to the dominant thoughts on education at that time, the achievements of media literacy conceived radio and movies as mere sources of content, in a trend which remained surprisingly untouched until the end of the 1980s - at least in respect to what was generated by the federal government.

From a different perspective, a group of educators of UCBC (Brazilian Association of Christians for Social Communication) have been promoting media literacy since the 1960s, with emphasis on critical reading, which was absent under the scope of the military rule (Moran, 1991). In the 1970s and 1980s, during the dictatorship, physical violence perpetrated by the state and censorship limited civil rights, affecting the national system of education and obstructing the media literacy debate. The UCBC intended to inoculate a critical view of the media, by 'showing' how it was designed to inevitably distort reality and bring harm to people.

After Brazil returned to democracy in 1985, a set of educational reforms took place in the country. Supported by the promulgation of a new Constitution in 1988, known as the 'Citizen Constitution', education finally began to be seen as a social right, and schools began to be thought of as privileged spaces to foster democratic values. The curriculum of these new schools became more inclusive and flexible, and started to encompass the study of media messages and the expansion of the concept of language, comprising not only verbal text, but also image, cinema, comic strips, dance, etc.

The most significant increase occurred after the second-half of the 1990s, when educational authorities promulgated the Law of Basis and Directives of the National Education and launched the new curricular guidelines to the basic education, formally including the media in school activities. The Secretary of Distance Education of the Brazilian Ministry of Education introduced the Media in Education Program, a course devoted to the continued development of teachers, carried out by public universities and

municipal secretaries of education. The programme focuses on the several ways in which media languages could be used in teaching and unfolds strategies to teach pupils on how to critically understand media. Over 10 years, 32 universities from 25 Brazilian States have been associated to the Ministry of Education, conducting the mission according to the plans and supporting materials designed by the Secretary of Distance Learning.

Since 1993, the municipality of Rio de Janeiro has been supporting the Multirio initiative, which is an organisation responsible for media literacy projects for teachers, youths and their families. In 2004, Multirio hosted the 4th World Summit on Media for Children and Youth, an event promoted by the World Summit on Media for Children Foundation.

Thus, Brazil's achievements in media education have been mounting up for over 80 years. Perhaps the main difference between Brazil and the level of development reached in the UK and other countries is that Brazil has never had a systemic policy of media literacy encompassing matters related to media content access, assessment and production. What we have instead is a set of fragmented practices in irregular, disconnected layers. As a consequence, up to now, teacher training courses still do not have clear directives on media literacy or appropriate pedagogic materials.

Legal and theoretical background

Despite the lack of a media education policy, Brazilian researchers find legal basis in some references developed in the educational field. One of the most relevant is the National Curriculum Parameters to the Basic Education and Secondary Education (Brasil, 1997, 2000a).

When focusing on the centrality of language analysis from the first years of the Basic School, those parameters have proposed the importance of the 'active reception', a practice which 'increasingly becomes a necessity, particularly in what comes to texts disseminated by the mass media' (Brasil, 1997: 54).

The parameters devoted to the Secondary School refer to Media Studies in the section named Codes, Languages and Technologies. The document urges, in the teaching of Arts, to the need of 'apprehending the impact of information and communication technologies over the production and development of knowledge and social life' and of 'applying those technologies in school, work and other contexts relevant to the students' lives' (Brasil, 2000a: 12).

Two basic skills become key aspects in those parameters: a) to judge, analyse and interpret sources of different kinds, recognising the role of different languages, social agents and contexts involved; b) to produce interpretative and analytical texts about historic

developments.

The nature of these recommendations means that the improvement of critical reading skills has been sought in Brazil along with international tendencies, particularly in respect to the understanding of the audience (which is active and negotiates text meanings), to critical thinking (which demands the comprehension of ways in which personal tastes are shaped by cultural institutions) and to the production of content using a variety of platforms and languages.

Under the lens of UNESCO, such international trends have led to a general understanding according to which critical thinking about receiving and producing mass communication media implies 'knowledge of personal and social values, responsibilities relating to the ethical use of information, as well as participation in cultural dialogue and the maintenance of autonomy in a context where influences eroding that autonomy may be particularly subtle' (UNESCO, 2008: 6). In few and interesting words, although maybe too simplified, UNESCO's definition of media and information literacy 'could be summed up as being centred on five core competencies, referred to as the 5Cs: Comprehension, Critical thinking, Creativity, Cross-cultural awareness and Citizenship' (UNESCO, 2008: 6), which are thought to be central to improve academic performance.

We also built on a Latin American perspective drawn by Martin-Barbero (2004) about the connections between educational and media systems in the subcontinent. For him, the evolution of communication in Latin America has felt the impact of trends of fragmentation and inequality observed in other fields of social life. In the daily life of most people, the production of the cultural industries have occupied the channels of expression of cultural identities, and displaced knowledge obtained from the formal education which, at least in Brazil until the 1990s reforms, had been a privilege for a few.

In particular to the lives of young people from the working classes located in urbanised regions, family is no longer the main source of standards of behaviour, school is no longer recognised as a place where knowledge is legitimised, and books are not a major cultural reference anymore:

> Youths face nowadays the emergence of new sensitivenesses, endowed with great empathy for the culture of technology, which goes from the information absorbed by the adolescents in their relationship with the television to the readiness to enter and deal with the complexity of computer networks. (Martin-Barbero, 2004: 66)

This scenario portrays the gap between a culture from which teachers get their references, and a culture which forms the environment where students learn, as teachers

often ignore that the media 'not only decentralizes forms of transmission and circulation of knowledge, but also constitutes a decisive circuit for socialisation and mechanisms of identification/projection of codes of behavior, lifestyles and standards of taste' (Martin-Barbero, 2004: 66).

According to Martin-Barbero (2004), schools should find appropriate means to interact with the experiences in which the most significant cultural changes of our time have been felt, comprising achievements merging science and art, connections between literature and audio-visual text, learning through networks forged by users' interests, creativity fed by information gathering.

Three paradigmatic questions emerge from this context:

1. How to stimulate reading and writing skills required by contemporary culture?
2. How to integrate a generation of students adapted to life after the computer, to a generation of teachers not very confident in using digital culture?
3. How to harmonically combine school and media culture without falling into the enticing, blind faith in the promises brought by the technological advance, and, at the same time, without adhering to the conservative moral panic which tries to prevent us from being manipulated by the alleged lure of media?

By moral panic, we think of the 'media narratives around toxic childhood, violence, videogames and an apathetic generation of young people', considered as a 'reactionary response which focuses on the potential dangers of new technologies' (Green & Hannon, 2007: 20). The moral panic is often fought by a similarly misleading force in the opposite direction, a 'technological determinism that hails all new technology as positive and potentially transformational' (Green & Hannon, 2007: 20).

While these simplistic notions have been clouding the debate over effective ways to foster media literacy education, one answer comes from the multiliteracies, understood as a variety of skills which require the mastering of new grammars from fields of study such as linguistics, semiotics, discourse analysis, visual design, body language and space and sound readings (New London Group, 2000).

The new grammars, however, contain a huge amount of knowledge and so they would be too difficult to teach in school. Thus, in order to develop multiliteracies, it becomes necessary to work on a multimodal, functional grammar, gathering elements from different areas of knowledge that are expected to be applied to activities of verbal and non-verbal reading and writing. This implies the creation of a system of metalinguistic, cognitive operations applicable to a variety of usual situations in workplaces, public and private lives, which take into account how our mind works, both in social interactions and learning contexts. Such a system is understood as crucial because 'our view of mind, society and learning is based

on the assumption that the human mind is embodied, situated and social. That is, human knowledge is embedded in social, cultural and material contexts' (New London Group, 2000: 30).

A pedagogy of multiliteracies seeks a path to link the social and economic circumstances to school learning environment, based on an approach which values **situated teaching practice** (people learn more when they feel it is important to their daily life); **overt instruction** (teachers must explain straightforwardly how to associate and dismantle meanings); **critical framing** (anything must be analysed within its social and historical context, with values, ideologies and political leanings, in order to make usual discourses, such as science and journalism, sound unnatural); and **transformed practice** (after selecting, isolating and studying a given aspect of contemporary culture, one must be able to understand its role in the big picture). From this perspective, reading becomes much more than the classic school admits. It means adding form, content, and context in what Kress (2000) names as a multimodal literacy.

Assuming that the human being possesses a variety of ways to create social relationships by means of senses, symbolic systems and mediums, Kress (2000) reminds us that, in essence, we all are multimodal beings, for none of our senses operates isolated, except in cases of pathological deficiencies. However, human culture, due to historic, economic and social reasons, selects and values some possibilities of senses, codes and mediums, which turn out to be more efficient and developed than others.

As a consequence, other forms of relationship with the world, such as visual languages, responsiveness to sound sequences and structures, and spatial information tend to be underestimated, both in daily life and school education. But the emergence of digital culture has challenged that tradition, and now we need to find ways to integrate other languages to school knowledge, in a similar position to the verbal language.

Historically, the basic concept of multimodality was built at the same period in which another group of researchers developed a new approach for the literacy studies, in the early 1980s. Drawing on ethnographic research methods, the literacy scholars identified that different communities carried different practices with words. Gee's studies (1996), for instance, regarding language practices of Afro American children, suggested that it was necessary to situate language within the broader context of social practices. Thus, language studies could include events and practices from a wider range of meaning systems employed in everyday communication, as pointed out by the social semiotics concept of mode, 'a socially shaped and culturally given resource for making meaning', according to Kress (2009: 54).

At this point, multimodality and the new literacy studies converged on the media literacy approach. If the media is a daily life experience that mixes image, sounds, texts and structures, multimodality is a core issue when it comes to critical reading of media texts. Then, critical reading can be understood as the ability of dealing with multimodal texts and of being able to understand them as discourses imbued with a particular intention, culturally constituted and shaped (Street, Pahl & Rowsell, 2009).

Those cultural approaches to literacy affected other instances of daily school practices. One of them is certainly the learning assessment. Planning activities, executing and evaluating them are closely related to the concept of media learning possessed by each teacher.

An attempt to give a definition of the media literacy field of study was made by Buckingham (2003), who describes some basic principles:

1. Preparing the young to deal with the media is more productive than protecting them from the alleged harmful effects of media culture;
2. We should not ignore the pleasure following experiences with the media in educational activities;
3. Most of the work should be done by means of deduction (students reach their own conclusions from the evidence available) rather than induction (students must agree with a conclusion previously supported by the teacher);
4. Media study practices should encompass at some point key concepts of this field: language, representation, production routines and audience moods. The nature of the activity usually emphasizes one of those aspects, but we should keep in mind that they are part of a whole that sustains critical reading;
5. Given the complexity of tasks, there is not one single pedagogic strategy that might be taken as the most appropriate. Individual task assignments, in small groups, can be used to encourage the students, as well as giving proper information, discussing perspectives, analysing examples, and proposing practical production;
6. In a way, all these strategies have in common the fact that they are focused on the students and begin with the idea that the young have some familiarity with the media and have valid questions and interests which are useful to the teacher plans;
7. However, we also should keep in mind that there are relevant aspects of the media that the young do not know and must learn, such as issues on politics and ethics, essential to lay the grounds for a critical and independent attitude with respect to the mass culture.

Buckingham (2003) proposes that media literacy comprises more than a narrow concept of reading and writing, as it includes skills of metalinguistic reading, analysing

and apprehending the social and economic forces which influence mass communications. The problem with this narrow concept is that, according to Livingstone (2003), it focuses on the media user rather than on the social formation of the mind, ignores the role of codes and technologies to message composition and gives priority to individual gains instead of socially constructed knowledge. In order to develop a consistent critical analysis, Buckingham (2003), following cultural studies (Hall, 1973), suggests that it is necessary to perceive how the understanding of a media message varies according to the audience profile, in a culturalist approach to study the media in schools. The media sets the stage for symbolic wars, materialised in discourse. Knowing how to access such discourses, read, dismantle and evaluate them is the first step to promoting critical and independent media readings.

Our experiment

The concepts we sketched above guided the development of our practices. We took into consideration the knowledge, interests and doubts possessed by the students as a starting point. We strived to create a consistent dialogue between the Brazilian media culture and school culture. We added a variety of languages in media content reading and production, avoiding the dependence on verbal language. We used several pedagogic strategies, varied according to the many learning goals. We had conversations to discuss the evidence and negotiated the outcome, without imposing models of right or wrong, but aiming to reach a conclusion about the reason why a given media text has some characteristics and not others, and how its meaning would be understood by our groups of students.

Among the many aspects suitable to media literacy classes, we chose the study of language, because it seemed the most appropriate subject of the area of the Brazilian curricular references named Codes, Languages and Technologies. We produced pedagogical materials to stimulate critical reflection on the social role and the influence of the media on education, and tested all resources we made in separate workshops, to students and teachers, during weekly three-hour meetings from February to June 2008 (20 students, from the first and the third years of Secondary School) and weekly two-hour meetings from August to November 2008 (10 teachers of Secondary School, from a variety of fields of knowledge). The workshops for students were carried out in our academic, media literacy laboratory, with multimedia computers and cameras. But we joined the teachers in their own place of work to conduct our media literacy workshops.

All the students and the teachers we worked with are from a school which got a 5.4 in 2009 in the Ideb exam (Brazilian abbreviation for Basic Education Development Index), a national indicator in a scale from 0 to 10, combining the performance of the students from a school in other two tests (one for primary and another one for secondary education)

and the average time in which a student finishes a school term. The higher the index, the better the student performance, and the shorter the average time needed by the students to finish a school term (considering the standard time of one year per term). The result of 5.4 is higher than the one obtained by the city of Bauru (4.7) and the State of Sao Paulo (4.3), where the school is located. It is also higher than the national average for state schools (4.9), but lower than the index reached by private schools (6.4).

We expected that both students and teachers would become more skilled at making critical readings and producing audiovisual content after attending our meetings, when key concepts of media production techniques were addressed.

An important reference for our project was the UNESCO's 'media education: a kit for teachers, students, parents and professionals' (2006). This is a guide proposing a general modular curriculum organised in six modules: The cultural environment of media; Media production; Media languages; Representation in the media; The publics in reception; Pedagogical stages and strategies. Each module describes a key concept to encourage critical and creative thinking and suggests related activities. For example, the activity 'Selling Youth' proposes that students should be asked:

1. to think about how advertisements define images and qualities of a particular product;
2. to analyse quotes from advertising in newspapers or magazines and think about how companies target their products to young audiences;
3. to assume the role of an advertising agency responsible for introducing a new product aimed at their age group. Other examples deal with teaching *The Simpsons*, photography and identity.

The UNESCO guide sketches interesting activities and offers general insights on methods. Our approach was to use it as a starting point to generate a set of activities that, simultaneously, exercised reading, writing and critical reflection on cultural trends that built and shaped media texts.

Bearing that background in mind, we developed a five step methodology for the workshops, which dealt simultaneously with reading and writing skills, using verbal texts, sound, still and moving images and digital media, presented as follows:

1. Module 1: Use of social networks, web tools 2.0 (workshop 1). The students opened and started to manage their own blogs and accounts in Flickr, You Tube etc;
2. Module 2: The language of advertisement (workshop 2). We studied the appeal of some Coke ads available on You Tube and learned to identify their target. Then the students produced the so-called 'value the nerds campaign', to convince people with inappropriate attitudes in school to change their bad habits and think about behaving as diligent students;

3. Module 3: The language of movie trailers (workshops 3 to 12). We focused on four movie trailers: *Pirates of the Caribbean: The Curse of the Black Pearl* (2003), *Saw* (2004), *American Pie* (1999) and *Zuzu Angel* (2006) – a Brazilian movie based on the real story of a woman who challenged the military rule to find the truth about her son, a political prisoner who was tortured and killed in prison. We designed a lesson plan to study cinematography, sound, editing, narrative, audience expectations and movie reviews. As the students watched the trailers and learned concepts, they produced their own experiments with cameras, creating scripts, storyboards and dialogues, filming, choosing music score and effects, and editing;
4. Module 4: The language of radio broadcast (workshops 13 to 15). From a script we had previously produced, the students made a radio programme, which was then played to the whole class. This exercise was useful to show the basic structure of a radio programme and to teach how to use Audacity, a free software for sound editing. In another exercise, the students produced a programme about one song they could freely select among their general preferences. Then they wrote a text to justify their choice and interviewed two other people to gather opinions on the song. The three points of view were summarised in the editing of another program;
5. Module 5: The language of photography (workshops 16 to 19). We started here with photo sessions about randomly picked objects. With pictures taken by the students as a starting point, we did some analysis about concepts such as framing, light, connotation and relation between picture and subtitle. In this exercise, we compared pictures taken by the students with pictures we selected from newspapers, magazines, photography books etc (Figure 1). Finally, we simulated a car crash, and the students had to get pictures of the scene for a variety of editorial profiles (daily papers, sensationalist ones and women's magazines) and write subtitles.

Introduction

Today, in our workshop we are going to learn how to read values behind media images. Think of a famous picture. It can be the Earth seen from the outer space, of an athlete crossing the finish line, of the Miss Brazil crying when receiving the crown… When we look at these images, we can read them in two ways, although we cannot notice it. First, we identify the big scene: who the people are, gesture, landscape and colors. At the same time, we go on by assigning meaning to what we see. Planet Earth can be associated to loneliness, an athlete to victory, the lady to vulgarity! In the study of pictures, we name these kinds of thinking as "denotation" and "connotation". Now we will talk about them.

Today's tasks:

1. Discussing the pictures taken by the students in the last week.
2. Analyzing the pictures brought by the teacher.
3. Identifying concepts of denotation and connotation in the pictures taken by the students and the ones brought by the teacher.
4. Choosing three pictures taken by the students, publishing them on a blog and analyzing them in terms of denotation and connotation.

Links we will be using:

1. A Flickr page filled with pictures taken by the students: http://www.flickr.com/photos/midialab
2. A Picture of Planet Earth seen from the outer space: http://www.kevs-korner.com/photos/hubble/EARTH_FROM_SPACE_credit_NASA.jpg
3. Sports pictures published by UOL (one of the biggest Brazilian web portals): http://esporte.uol.com.br/fotos/
4. Pictures of ads of Calvin Klein: http://4.bp.blogspot.com/_ZLPXnb3_KuQ/SpB6EpyrgGI/AAAAAAAABFU/8p4jRgMoWYw/s320/ver%C3%A30+2010+CKJ.jpg

Hints to guide the picture analysis

1. Observe the picture of the Planet Earth and make a list of the words in your mind about it. Compare such a list with the ones made by your friends. Afterwards, we will collectively organize a single list, in two separate groups: words which describe the image (denotation) and words which assign a meaning to the image (connotation).
2. Do the same with the pictures of ads of Calvin Klein.
3. Now, try to identify specific photography elements which made you associate words to meanings.
4. Try to organize these elements in large concepts, using the following categories: scene, objects, poses and expressions, words or logos which may be read in the pictures.
5. Go back to the pictures we took in the last week, choose two of them and try to identify where the elements of denotation and connotation are.
6. Don't forget to post on our blog your views about today's workshop!

Fig. 1 – A media education lesson plan

After the last workshop, the students were given a diary to fill up within a month, with the purpose of assessing what they had learned. The diaries contained 28 pages, with an introduction with brief guidelines about what they should do. There were four sections where they could express their feelings and impressions, related to:

1. The student's own profile of cultural tastes and media consumption habits;
2. The mapping of media consumption within a week;
3. Critical reading of images we had previously selected;
4. And an open space where they could freely express their creativity by means of a scrapbook, drawings and so on.

The final stage was a focus group. The students were invited to make comments about their diaries and to express freely their opinions on the role of the media in their lives, how schools dealt with this matter, and what our workshops meant to them.

Results and discussion

Media diaries written by the students, detailed reports written by us, video recordings of all media literacy workshops and data from focus groups were analysed according to three categories:

1. skills to apprehend and use multimodal languages in content production;
2. criteria applied to assess media messages;
3. Criteria applied to assess mass culture.

We found that:

A. Both students and teachers became engaged in the activities. We noticed, however, that the participants were capable of perceiving only sparse relations between what we brought and the daily life in their schools. The teachers argued that they would not have appropriate conditions to give media literacy lessons, because they had too many students in one classroom (in the Brazilian secondary school, the number could be near 50) and due to the lack of support to use the existing technological resources. The teachers also said that the duration of classes (50 minutes) was not enough to the media literacy content.

The students showed a similar response, in some aspects. They recognised the relevance of what they learned in the experiment, but pointed out that it would not match the school as they knew it. But while the students blamed their teachers for the problem, the teachers blamed the educational system.

B. Most students found it easy to understand technical notions and identify resources of languages when analysing audio-visual texts. Mainly in the activities with reading and image production, we noticed that both students and teachers had a similar background

to feed composition and creativity. But while teachers reproduced some clichés and stereotypes, students seemed to easily master the typical aesthetic components of media culture, becoming capable of assuming perspectives different from the conventional angles and subjects.

C. When asked to express assessments of the value of a media production, both students and teachers frequently showed difficulties in identifying implications of representations, such as positive or negative depictions of a moral standard, and in locating language resources used to build a connotation.

The students tended to use terms such as 'cool', 'funny' and 'boring'. The teachers preferred more formal words, such as 'interesting', 'creative' and 'prejudice'. Both were not, however, able to analyse media messages beyond the surface. They could identify the presence of a specific meaning in a message, but could not explain how it was built.

That was the case, for example, when they studied photography in depth. Students walked around the campus and took pictures freely for half an hour. Back in the lab, they were asked to analyse their own production, bearing in mind three questions:

1. what did you want to express with this picture?
2. how did your colleagues read your picture?
3. which particular picture elements were responsible for driving the most common interpretations?

Generally speaking, the greatest difficulty for them was to transform subjective thinking into writing, as it happened, for instance, in the case of a picture taken by a 15 old boy. There is a bug on the foreground and spiky leaves on the background. The insect is tiny and cute and the leaves look large and dangerous. That picture could be seen as a metaphor for insecurity, and the student-author seemed to be aware of that, but he just answered 'I managed to photograph the insect along with the leaf'. Another student answered 'it seems that the bug does not match the leaf'. They were not able to produce a more consistent sentence such as 'there is a contrast between the bug's sweetness and the leaf's unkindness'.

Barthes' concepts of connotation and denotation (Barthes, 1990) were also adapted for Secondary School level in a workshop focused on photography implicit meanings. Still analysing students' pictures, the group selected an image which showed a young boy with the head and half-torso inside a rubbish bin. When asked about the possible meanings of that picture, students answered that it was 'funny', 'cool', 'disgusting'. We questioned if the young were associated with the rubbish in the picture, and all of them agreed. The student-author then said that such a thought did not come to his mind at the moment of the shot. They seemed to be surprised at the reading possibilities, and that moment was a sign that

the students had developed critical thinking.

A further example of this difficulty came from the discussion, in the classroom, of a short video made by the students with the following script: a student steps down from a bus in a rush to get in the school. He runs, stumbles and gets nervous. When he finally arrives at his destiny, he realises that he has forgotten to bring the homework exercise he has properly done. In the end, a narrator says: 'this is the moral of the story: why do homework, if you're going to forget your exercise book, anyway?'. The teachers told us that they could not accept such a video as a correct outcome, because it would go against school values. The students cannot reject their homework duties, they said. The students, of course, argued that it was just a joke. This showed that matters of identity are an intrinsic part of the media literacy field of study, arising in the most unexpected situations. In the workshops we conducted with the teachers, we referred to that example in order to discuss the problem and we tried to show that, despite the controversy generated by that script, it provided an opportunity to learn about language and representation.

We can argue that the inventiveness of that veiled criticism of the school rules introduced by the students only arose because they could experiment with multiliteracy. And, as Buckingham (2003) reminds us, we cannot ignore that media education exercises might be a source of pleasure to students, particularly, we may add, when they are suddenly enabled to subvert the rules, on the pretext of experimenting new languages. Teachers must be aware that exercises concerned with the development of multiliteracies may prompt new ways of criticism directed to school foundations, which they should not repress, or they might be working against the very purpose of using multimodal pedagogy.

D. When systematically observing video recordings, we noticed that the students used to fear expressing their own opinions, on tape and in their blogs. They seemed very uncomfortable when exchanging and debating ideas, and not confident of their skills when asked to produce criticism. We realised that a school culture in which the students have not been adequately encouraged to debate can pose a significant challenge to media literacy education.

E. The media diaries were not useful. Although they were structured with a set of questions familiar to the Brazilian young and were intended to encourage self-expression by means of paste-ups, drawings and phrases without due context, they were returned with little information, most times unintelligible, superficial, quickly written and without the engagement seen in the workshops.

Focus groups helped us to get some understanding of what was going on. We noticed that the superficiality was a consequence of an unexpected attitude. The students were not confident enough to express freely their opinions because, according to them, the school

gave incentives in the opposite direction. In the classroom, another attitude had been encouraged, that is, the mere repetition of those contents exposed by the teachers. Thus, when asked to be creative, the students showed no confidence. They were told that they would be free to write, paste and make scrapbooks about whatever subject they liked. We did not require them to use formal written language. Nevertheless, we did not receive the response we expected.

This suggests that the habit of reflecting about one's own learning is not part of the regular practices of thinking taught by Brazilian schools — at least not in the case of the group of students we focused, not even when they had the opportunity of using more familiar and informal languages.

We noticed that the students did not show the capacity of making precise reports. We received media diaries with the names of their preferred media, but they did not specify the songs they listened to, tv shows they watched, websites etc, although they knew that this kind of information was what we expected. Maybe they were just lazy. But we could conclude, from the data collected in the focus groups, that the inability to make deeper observations and notes was attached to the perception that those eventually filled pages would not pay off in terms of grades in school. As shocking as it can be, this just confirms that grades continue to be exchangeable value for many teachers, which they trade for more compliance with and less resistance to their requests.

Going through an entire school life like that, students comply with only those dictates attached to grades. When they face the opportunity to do differently, they let it go. And the fact that there will not be any clear consequences following that indifference confirms the perception that grades, after all, are the only motivation for school tasks.

Conclusion

We think that our study has given a contribution to support the idea according to which media literacy is a privileged, multidisciplinary field that gives the students opportunities to express their opinions with creativity and make experiments with a variety of languages. Although this could be seen by some as an old truism, it still has to be put forward in countries and regions where teachers strive to minimise the weight of traditional approaches to the curricular organisation.

The major purpose of media literacy of forming critical and independent readers-producers might have been hindered in our experiment by a condition which is, paradoxically, meant to be solved by the exercise itself: the difficulty of mastering language in a level high enough to allow the expression, by pupils, of how learning about the media

might be useful to expand their comprehension of social, economic, political and cultural dimensions of our world.

Thus, we go to another matter: how to teach young people to reflect on their own tastes and beliefs in respect to mass culture? The results of focus groups give us an indication about where to start: according to statements from the adolescents, as the teachers do not reflect on knowledge about media and do not stimulate that kind of thinking in the classroom, the students will not be able to do it either. The adolescents who participated in the workshops showed awareness about this. They complained that classes are too 'automatic' and that they do not have room for using their own creativity. They have ideas, but feel too intimidated to express them.

When speaking to the teachers, we noted an anxiety in respect to the cultural gap between adults and youths in the classrooms. However, for the teachers, this seems to be caused mainly by a deficient infrastructure of their workplace, rather than by personal attitudes. It was practically a consensus among the teachers of our sample group the wish to bring controversial themes into the classroom, to study media, and to reflect on tastes and values. But they cannot do it, as they said, due to work overload, crowded classrooms, difficulty of finding appropriate materials and lack of adequate training.

This led us to fear that we might not go any further unless a comprehensive educational reform takes place in Brazil, particularly in respect to the necessary change of established teaching practices.

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Research Reports

Initiating media education Through Educational Policy: A Case in China

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Key words: media education, educational policy, curriculum reform, China

Abstract

Media education is difficult for Chinese schools to practice without official support. This research considers how educational policy, particularly curriculum policy, can promote media education practice in China. In educational policy, a three-level curriculum (national, local and school) system is established and new curriculum standards are issued which provide an official guideline for the development of media education. This study analyses how educators take advantage of educational policy to implement media education in their schools and, at the same time, how media education provides alternatives for curriculum reform. It is a qualitative case study, making use of document analysis and interviews as the main methods with which to explore the implications of educational policy for media education in China.

Introduction

In China, media education is advocated on the basis of technological impact on children, adolescents and curriculum. The Ministry of Education (2001) issued Basic Education Curriculum Reform and new Curriculum Standards of Eighteen Subjects at the same time. An integrated curriculum was strongly recommended in the lower grades in basic education to avoid subject-oriented teaching and learning. The state encouraged a school-based curriculum, which promoted the flexibility of curriculum construction in school itself. Media education seized this opportunity.

The influence of media on the expansion of literacy cannot be isolated from institutional discourse and practices, in which media are constructed through educational and cultural activities. The evolvement and shifts of literacy accord with social and cultural changes and in relation to the interests of elites who control the hegemonic institutions (Kellner & Share, 2005). Therefore, the definitions of literacy at work in educational and social-economic systems vary. The Chinese educational system is centralised, but the

curriculum reform decentralises curriculum construction from the government. The state still holds its orientation on literacy by setting the national curriculum standards for schools. But the expansion of literacy include media technology, either as a tool to facilitate teaching or as a learning object to teach about in the new National Curriculum Standards of Eighteen Subjects in China.

Recently, media literacy has been clearly located in the Shanghai Education Reform and Development of Medium and Long-term Planning Framework (2010-2020) following the National Planning Framework (2010-2020), which sets direction in the next ten years (Shanghai Municipal Education Commission, 2010). This is good news for media educators, but how does media education practice depend on the individual school? It might be assumed that once the state realises the significance of media education, media education should grow faster with support from government. But this idea emphasises the power of the state instead of the school. It neglects school initiative.

Although there are some indicators in curriculum reform for the development of media education, it is not widely practiced in schools and such practice still mostly depends on personal or organizational interests in mainland China. In this study, the context is a primary school in Beijing, where media education is taken either as an independent subject or in integration. The study is focussed on how the school initiates media education and how it makes changes in response to educational policy via media education.

Methods

Qualitative research is often in the form of a case study, which is to deeply investigate a phenomenon, provide answers to research questions, and explore a process or explain a change. In this study, the research questions explore how the school takes advantage of curriculum policy to develop media education.

Interview

Teachers who teach Information Technology, Chinese and Moral Education are encouraged to integrate media literacy into their teaching in this school. These teachers are, then, always thinking about the integration of their teaching subjects and media literacy. The interviewees include a principal and ten teachers. The interview questions are mainly concerned with why they practice media education, what they think of the relationship between media education and curriculum policy and how they combine media literacy with their teaching subjects.

Document analysis

The analysed documents include governmental texts and curriculum documents specifically, and the latter is the focus in this study. Beside these official materials, the researcher also reviewed teaching plans and research papers written by the interviewed teachers to supplement the data from the interview. Since some of the interviewed teachers are very active in media education, they joined in some seminars and conferences for media educators and published their teaching plans and research papers – these additional artefacts turn out to be rich data for this study.

Preliminary findings

From the perspective of the state, media education can be practiced to promote moral education, which conforms to national educational aims. This indicates the state's conservative manner in consideration of media literacy. The policy stresses moral judgment from / in response to the media instead of a more comprehensive literacy development. However, the school in this case activates its practices of media education by getting legitimatised support from curriculum policy. It enhances media literacy either across the existing subjects or through an independent school-based media education course. The relationship between the state and the school cannot simply be described as powerful state and "passive" school. The initiative from the school is crucial for the development of media education. The school not only meshes media literacy into its routine teaching, but also makes more connections with other institutions in order to advocate media education in local communities.

By taking advantage of educational policy, media education not only activates school culture, but also promotes teachers' professional development. The school complies with Tao Xingzhi's educational philosophy, who believed that school must be closely connected to society and students' real life experience. The school principals understood that media education embodies "life is education" and is close to students' real life (Du & Wang, 2009). Besides teachers have to think over how to take students' media experience into their classroom - that is, how to combine media literacy with their teaching subjects. In the course of research and practice, teachers' professionalism develops, articles and teaching plans are published and teachers are also invited to present their experience in different situations. They do not simply transmit knowledge, but also study how to improve teaching and learning in an era of digital media. Media education becomes an agent for promotion in school culture and teachers' professional development.

Media literacy can be achieved by various channels, but school appears to be the best place to develop students' critical reflections on media systematically and formally. In this case, it appears that educational policy cannot be thought of as one-way, from the authority to the school field. Instead, school innovation, based on its culture and students' interests, is crucial. Then the school initiative should strengthen and influence the policy in reverse. To some extent, the school promotes the practice and theory of media education in China, but it is unclear how powerful school practice is at this moment from the perspective of policy makers.

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Evaluating Media Education: a Quantitative Approach

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Key words: film education, media audiences, quantitative methods, learning outcomes

Abstract

In this research report, we build a case for quantitative methods as a tool to analyse media education. Within the UK in particular, discussions about media teaching and media learning are mainly informed by qualitative, interpretive classroom-based research. However, quantitative measurements provide the opportunity to more transparently assess the process and the outcomes of media education. Moreover, statistical techniques help to make inferences beyond a limited number of children or adolescents. To illustrate this point, we share parts of an ongoing research project on film education. In the first half of 2009 we conducted a large scale (N=1048) pre-test post-test field experiment. Our preliminary analyses indicate that media literacy scholars should more clearly distinguish between different types of explanatory and outcome variables.

Evaluating media education: a quantitative approach[1]

One way to analyse the confusing realities of classroom practice is through interpretive, qualitative research. Within the UK in particular, academic discussions about media teaching and media learning are mainly informed by classroom-based research, often conducted in collaboration with teachers themselves (see Buckingham, 1996, 1990, 1998b; Buckingham & Sefton-Green, 1994; Burn & Durran, 2007).

In line with cultural studies' focus on media audiences, these scholars emphasise the importance of paying close attention to the complex ways in which children and adolescents make judgments about media and how they use these media to form personal and social identities (Buckingham, 1998a, 2003). This approach has firmly dispelled any

1 Thanks to David Cooper Moore and an anonymous reviewer for useful comments on an earlier draft of the manuscript.

simplistic notion of media education as a means to protect vulnerable children and adolescents from the negative influence of all-powerful media. Yet for all its theoretical nuance, interpretive approaches are not without methodological weaknesses. For instance, because of the large number of analytical decisions involved, qualitative researchers have difficulties giving an objective account of their protocol or their analysis process. Moreover, contextual richness often comes at the cost of any basis to generalise beyond the details of specific media literacy practices (Gomm, 2008; Potter, 1996). By contrast, quantitative methods provide an opportunity to transparently measure and compare the processes and the outcomes of media education across individual cases. At the same time, statistical techniques help to test theoretical hypotheses, rule out competing explanations, and detect new relationships (for some recent empirical examples, see Martens, 2010).

To illustrate this point, we share parts of an ongoing quantitative research project on film education. *Lesson in the Dark* is a non-profit organization that aims to help young people to appreciate 'non-mainstream' film.[2] Every year, about 80,000 pupils from Flemish primary (age 6 to 12) and secondary (age 12 to 18) education –roughly ten percent of the total Flemish student population – participate in a *Lesson in the Dark* film activity. Participants first watch a film together in a local cinema. Afterwards, teachers discuss key concepts such as film production, film language, and film audiences to provide insight into film as a multifaceted art form. We will first detail our research instrument. Subsequently, we elaborate on some theoretical implications of our preliminary data analysis.

Research instrument

In the first half of 2009 we conducted a pre-test post-test field experiment in the Flemish community (Belgium). Though a true random sample was impossible, we sampled five large and diverse schools (N=1048) in an attempt to achieve a maximum of variance along our theoretical dimensions of interest (Gerring, 2007).

Respondents completed a pre-test survey questionnaire the week before the film activity. During the film activity, they first watched one of five films, ranging from 'less' to 'more' mainstream according to the films' Belgian box office performance. After the screening, the majority of participating teachers analysed the film in class using the *Lessons in the Dark* teaching materials. Approximately 1 in 3 teachers did not use these materials. Teacher participation adds an interesting dimension to the study design; some pupils were

2 Obviously, this is quite a specific aim. Nevertheless, within the European context, media education has often been (and continues to be) closely related to this type of cultural issues (Bolas, 2009; European Commission, 2009).

merely exposed to the film, while others (in addition) participated in a film analysis course. Because this decision was made by the teacher and not by the students, both groups remain comparable, especially when we control for demographic variables. Because media education cannot be reduced to a merely rational phenomenon (Buckingham, 1998, 2003), we differentiate between three types of learning outcomes. The first, cognitive learning ('what do pupils learn?') was measured using an 11-item recall test (Kearney & Beatty, 1994). These questions included recall of information from the film such as 'What was the main topic of the film?' and 'What were the three most important stylistic characteristics of the film?' The second learning outcome, affective learning ('will pupils generalise what they learn beyond the classroom?') was measured using a 9-item, 5-point differential scale (Kearney, 1994), which asked students to evaluate the film activity and the likelihood of them watching this type of film again. The third learning outcome, *attitude change* (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993), was measured by asking respondents on a 3-item, 5-point differential scale to evaluate the films they see in their spare time and those they see in a school context. To map any short-term changes in how pupils evaluate a film's quality, we asked them, on a 5-point scale, how important they find the following characteristics: an original film style, a well-crafted scenario, strong dialogues, complex characters, and a socially relevant topic.

As quantitative researchers do, we tried to understand these outcomes by building statistical models with a number of explanatory variables. From a theoretical point of view, we expected to better understand what works and what does not work in media education by clearly distinguishing between instructional (film analysis or not, mainstream or non-mainstream), social (gender, age, educational background) and individual (personal relevance) variables (see also Martens, 2010).

Data analyses

There are several ways to learn from these survey data. Most simply, we can compare some of the pre-test and post-test attitude measurements.

For instance, our pre-test data reveal that respondents evaluate the films they see in their spare time ($M=12.13$, $SE=.05$) significantly better than the films they see at school ($M=8.47$, $SE=.06$), $t(1009)=45.77$, $p<.001$. Surprisingly, this gap slightly increases after the film educational activity ($M=12.19$, $SE=.06$ versus $M=8.46$, $SE=.09$), $t(921)=33.10$, $p<.001$. The cognitive standard pupils use to evaluate film remains about the same before ($M=17.50$, $SE=.08$) and after ($M=17.45$, $SE=.09$) the film educational activity, $t(867)=.73$, $p=.47$. Also, teachers are perceived to be much less credible when teaching about film ($M=18.35$, $SE=.18$) compared to their general teaching credibility ($M=19.89$, $SE=.16$), $t(593)=9.93$, $p<.001$. In sum, these results give a rather disappointing view of the potential of a one-time film

educational activity; on average, it appears that the activity did not have a significant impact on learning or attitudes.

However, it would be ill-advised to stop here. In this project, we constructed and measured a variety of explanatory and outcome variables. Thus, we also looked for more complex patterns within our dataset. Table 1 presents the results of two multiple regressions run separately for cognitive learning and affective learning. Because of the large sample size, we should not be too surprised about the many significant results. A more straightforward interpretation is offered by our standardised regression coefficients. These coefficients enable us to compare the magnitudes of effects of variables in different units (Cohen et al., 2003).

Table 1 Predictors of media learning

	Cognitive Learning	Affective Learning
Instructional differences	_	_
Film analysis	.33**	.01
Mainstream film	.22**	.18**
Social differences		
Male	-.11*	-.07*
Age	-.12*	.13**
General or arts education	.27**	.01
Individual differences		
Personal relevance	.14**	.59**
	R_ = 17%**	R_ = 47%**

Note: Entries are standardized regression coefficients.
*p< . 01; **p< .001.

Table 1 indicates that cognitive learning is most positively influenced by instructional differences and educational form. Pupils who analysed the film in class scored significantly better on the cognitive learning test than those who did not. The same holds for those who have seen a 'more-mainstream' film. Also, pupils in general and arts education tend to do better here than pupils in technical or vocational education. Affective learning, by contrast, is overwhelmingly predicted by individual differences. True, the type of film is again of some importance. Still, students' willingness to generalise what they learn beyond the classroom is far more dependent on perceived personal relevance. Analysing the film in class and educational form appear to have no significant impact on pupils' affect toward media learning.

Discussion

Our data confirms what many have argued before: young people are not easily impressed by media educational activities that do not sufficiently take into account their personal experiences. Therefore, it seems good practice to start close to mainstream media culture. Nonetheless, a variety of individual and social differences make it difficult to design a one-size-fits-all approach.

Within this context, a clear distinction should be made between cognitive and affective learning outcomes. If cognitive learning is of primary interest, media educators should mainly focus on how to design their instructional methods. Clearly, pupils need conceptual guidance. Moreover, pupils seem more willing or able to learn about the media they like or know. Even then, it should be no surprise that pupils in academically-oriented forms often score better on standardised assessments. On the other hand, if affective learning is the most important goal, media educators will have to overcome many individual barriers that are too complex to be simply reduced to age, gender, or educational background. In other words, teachers need to be very attentive to young people's existing knowledge and preferences.

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MIE and a Curriculum for Excellence: Practitioner Perceptions

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Introduction

Cary Bazalgette, former head of education at British Film Institute and current chair of the Media Education Association, was commissioned by Scottish Screen in 2009 to produce a critique of recent research on moving image education (MIE) in order to assist in shaping future policy and direction. A key recommendation was that Scottish Screen should shift focus away from qualitative evaluation towards quantitative research, and concentrate on five lines of enquiry informed by studies such as those of Head et al, conducted by Glasgow University between 2006 and 2009. Potential research questions included:

- How does MIE actually contribute to the outcomes of the Curriculum for Excellence?
- What are the key elements of continuing professional development for MIE?

To address those particular issues, further research was conducted by Glasgow in 2010 in collaboration with Scottish Screen (now Creative Scotland). This report describes that research and the subsequent national initiative resulting from it.

The Scottish 3-18 curriculum, Curriculum for Excellence (CfE), introduced in August 2010, seeks to develop four main capacities: Successful Learners, Effective Contributors, Responsible Citizens and Confident Individuals. Despite substantial lead-in time, many practitioners struggle with the manner in which this ambitious curriculum should unfold in their classrooms.

Practitioners undertaking MIE activities, however, have consistently commented upon the richness, relevance and quality of learning that arises from them. ITE and CPD providers regularly comment that practitioners report that MIE provides exemplification, in a natural and unforced way, of what the architects of CfE envisaged regarding approaches to learning and wider more-rounded learning gains.

In April 2010 teachers and student teachers who had recently undertaken MIE activities were invited to complete an online survey to determine their views regarding the extent to which they considered that MIE has relevance to the aims of CfE, and gauge what measures might be appropriate to support their use of MIE in the context of the new curriculum. Of 164 respondents starting the survey, 144 completed it fully.

Methodology

The survey targeted BEd (Primary) Year three and four students, PGDE (Primary) students, Chartered Teacher course members who had undertaken one or both MIE modules and teachers who had undertaken CPD in MIE.

Participation was voluntary and anonymous. The only identifier-information collected was the broad constituency into which respondents fell to allow segmentation of the data. This could not be reverse-tracked to identify individuals.

The survey consisted of two parts. Part one focussed on the relevance of MIE to the four Capacities of CfE, while part two focussed on the participants' readiness, willingness and ability to use MIE in the classroom.

Initial analysis considered the responses of all participants to parts one and two to gain a broad impression of respondents' views. Further analysis, employing cross-tabulation, revisited those issues to identify potential differences between the various constituencies.

Questionnaire Part 1 – MIE and the four capacities

Participants rated the relevance of MIE to each strand of the four Capacities on a 4-point scale - Highly Relevant, Relevant, Not Very Relevant and Not Relevant at all.

Participants were then asked to select which comment best described MIE approaches overall in relation to CfE - Particularly Appropriate, Moderately Appropriate, Not Particularly Appropriate or Not Appropriate at all.

Key findings

Of the 148 respondents to that final questionnaire item of Part 1, 75.7 per cent considered that MIE was Particularly Appropriate in overtaking the aspirations of CfE, while 23.6 per cent responded that MIE was Moderately Appropriate. The remaining 0.7 per cent of respondents (one individual) responded that MIE was Not Particularly Appropriate.

The average Highly Relevant rating for MIE for each Capacity was:

- Successful Learners (SL) 67.1%
- Effective Contributors (EC) 67.0%
- Responsible Citizens (RC) 34.4%
- Confident Individuals (CI) 32.6%

This suggests a clear fault-line whereby practitioners consider two of the four capacities to be particularly appropriate but the other two less so. More research needs to

be undertaken to investigate what underlies this apparently stark division.

The following individual strands rated Highly Relevant according to less than 75 per cent of respondents:

- SL use technology for learning 86.6%
- EC communicate in different ways and different settings 84.6%
- EC create and develop 84.6%
- EC work in partnership and in teams 79.2%
- SL think creatively and independently 77.2%
- EC apply critical thinking in new concepts 75.8%

These are all aspects that the architects of CfE have been eager to promote as typifying the new style of pupil-centred learning that is not slavishly content-driven.

Of the 36 strands of the Capacities rated **Highly Relevant** or **Relevant** in relation to MIE:

- A total of 6 strands achieved 100%
- A further 13 strands achieved 95% or higher
- A further 11 strands achieved 80% or higher

Thus, 30 of the 36 individual strands of CfE's four Capacities achieved 80 per cent or higher.

Having established that Scottish practitioners consider MIE valid and valuable in terms of learning gains and behaviours in relation to CfE, it seems reasonable to propose that this could be of interest to other educational systems.

Questionnaire Part Two – MIE supporting and extending children's literacy

The survey investigated three aspects of MIE commonly used in schools - Short Film Texts (various analytical, exploratory and creative activities), Animation Production and Digital Video Production - in relation to:

- access to resources
- training needs
- impact on children's literacy
- likelihood of use in the classroom

Key findings

Access to resources

- Approximately eight per cent of respondents considered that all *teachers* had access

to resources to use short film but only two per cent and one per cent respectively considered that all teachers have access to resources for animation or digital video.
- 42.4 per cent of respondents considered that all or the majority of teachers had access to resources necessary to use short film, 33.6 per cent and 33.1 per cent respectively for animation or digital video.

Training needs
- 18.5 per cent of respondents considered that they would require no further training to use short film but only ten per cent and thirteen per cent felt this for animation with and thirteen per cent for digital video.
- 48 per cent considered that they would require no further training or very little further training for short film, with 34 per cent for animation and 38 per cent for digital video.

Impact on children's literacy
- Less than 70 per cent of respondents felt that short film would *significantly* support and extend children's literacy, while animation and digital video polled 55 and 60 per cent respectively.
- While the figures for animation or digital video both rise to approximately 94 per cent when the measure is expanded to include significantly and moderately, short film activities achieves 98 per cent. However, the figure of under 70 per cent achieved by short film activities on the measure of significantly on its own is arguably the more telling.

Likelihood of use in the classroom
- 56.2 per cent of respondents definitely see themselves using short film, placing it ahead of animation or digital video (41 and 44 per cent respectively).
- When this was expanded to definitely and possibly, short film remained ahead on 95.9 per cent compared to 89.7 per cent for animation and 89.5 per cent for digital video.

Thus, almost half of the respondents felt that they had access to resources and could begin using short film with little or no further training, while only a third felt that they could begin using animation or digital video. Almost three quarters felt that short film would significantly impact on children's literacy and more than half those surveyed could definitely see themselves incorporating short film into their practice.

Analysis by constituency

Further analysis by constituency investigated which constituencies were saying what in response to each item. This stratified approach provided relative percentages for the responses of individual constituencies.

Key findings by constituency

Revisiting the responses in relation to whether MIE is *particularly* appropriate in relation to CfE the individual constituencies responded as follows:

Chartered Teachers	92%
CPD Teachers	89%
PDGE(P) Students	72%
BEd 4 Students	67%
BEd 3 Students	69%

- This suggests there is more to MIE than youthful enthusiasm, and that professional experience brings with it greater recognition of its value.
- In part one, this pattern recurred across subsequent analysis of each individual strand of the Capacities.
- In part two, Chartered Teachers and CPD teachers consistently led with regard to the top-level positive responses on the four issues in relation to the three aspects of MIE.

Conclusions

- There is agreement across all constituencies that MIE has a particularly strong resonance with CfE.
- Development of MIE in Scottish schools should focus initially on the use of short film.
- Access to resources and additional training while still significant, might not be insurmountable when balanced against the learning gains that accrue from MIE and willingness of teachers to consider using MIE approaches.
- MIE short film resources should be more accessible at classroom level.
- Appropriate CPD / training approaches be developed, accessible to all teachers.

Outcome

As a result of this research, Creative Scotland and LTScotland, through their forthcoming literacy-focused Screening Shorts initiative, are providing 50 BFI short films freely available on-line, downloadable to registered users of GLOW (the Scottish schools digital network), complete with CPD activities and lesson exemplars. Further research into the subsequent

impact of this MIE initiative may be of interest to others outside Scotland.

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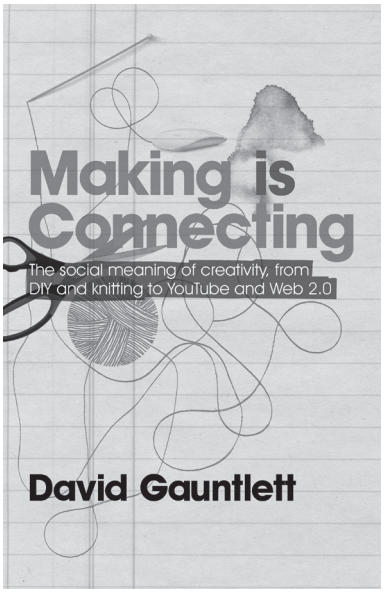
Book and Resources Reviews

Extended Review: *Making is Connecting: The social meaning of creativity, from DIY and knitting to You Tube and Web 2.0* by David Gauntlett (2011, London: Polity)



Editor's Introduction: *MERJ* readers will be familiar with the work of David Gauntlett who, in recent years, has written books and shared a plethora of online material around the themes of media and identity, the environment, creativity, visual and metaphorical research methods, Media Studies 2.0 and now - and most ambitiously - a general theory of *Making is Connecting*. In this new work he offers a dialogic 'tapestry', relating creative media activity (in the realm of web 2.0) to knitting and 'guerilla gardening' among many other examples of ordinary people actively producing media, art and craft in ways which are social and collaborative.

This is probably the most interesting period in the genealogy of media education precisely because we are spending far less time thinking about 'the media' and more of our attention is directed towards ourselves – and each other - and how media fit into ordinary life alongside a range of other ways of being literate, social and creative with others. And so there is no question that *Making is Connecting*, along with the debates around participation we explore with Henry Jenkins and others in our keynote editorial should be on the radar of media teachers. But we were keen to look at the book from a different angle – that of 'creativity' as an academic field – often neglected, or at best 'cherry-picked' by media education, if we are honest. We were, then, delighted that the author agreed to a different kind of review – in keeping with our interest in exchange, and making use of the connecting affordances of technology, we invited Mark Readman and Dave Trotman, two educators with a history of academic research into creativity to read

the book and offer some critical responses about the academic foundations of the book for David to discuss, alongside our own questions for the author from our media pedagogy perspective.

So firstly we asked David to account for his 'journey' from a critique of the effects model and 'theory trading cards' to his work on gender and identity, through visual and creative research methods, via the hotly contested 'Media Studies 2.0' (to which we devote our next issue to looking back at) to this more far-reaching and bold theory of connecting through making – with attendant environmental, ethical and political aspirations. Put simply, how does a media teacher end up here?

David Gauntlett: Well, I always wanted to do work that was in some way socially relevant and useful, combined with my interest in media and what people did with media, and wanting to find new or innovative ways to explore that. And in addition I wanted to engage people differently and to communicate in forms other than the famously unread academic journals. So the things you mention are all different dimensions of that really.

In *Making is Connecting*, I intend to demonstrate that everyday creativity – people making things, online or in the physical world – is not just a 'nice' way for individuals to pass the time, but is absolutely crucial for individual life satisfaction, and for the overall health of a society. It's a Media Studies book, in that it concerns the value of You Tube and other web 2.0 platforms, and offers a critique of more traditional media; but it seeks to understand these new platforms for creativity and exchange of ideas in the context of a broader spread of creative and craft activities, as you have mentioned, and in the context of what people have said about the meaning of everyday creativity, not just in relation to digital media but about different things and at different times.

For instance, it redeploys comments by Victorian art critic John Ruskin on medieval cathedral gargoyles as a way of looking at You Tube videos. It finds that the nineteenth-century socialist and tapestry-weaver William Morris dispensed a blueprint for the making and sharing ethos of web 2.0 in general, and Wikipedia in particular, 120 years early. The book takes the 1970s feminist Rozsika Parker's view of women's embroidery as a 'weapon of resistance', and considers it in relation to blogging; and it draws upon a lot of hard social-science data, gathered by economists as well as psychologists, regarding human happiness and social capital. Put simply, this shows that the most important things for a satisfying life in society are the opportunity to have creative control over whole projects, to make your mark and be recognised within a social network, and warm human relationships generally.

So, the book draws on diverse sources, but it's not as whimsical or random as it may

sound when I run off these examples here. I deliberately wanted to spread the net wide, to bring in the most fruitful ways of understanding the most recent forms of everyday creativity in the light of other forms and long-standing critical perspectives.

Julian McDougall: *MERJ* readers are a broad church of media educators, from primary teachers to researchers in higher education – all in one way or another concerned with teaching with or about media. How do you see the book being of interest or use to media educators, in particular?

DG: Well, it's not really for me to say if it'll be useful or not, but I would hope that the book is helpful because it gives an overview of a major trend, which if we are careful and fortunate will be the way in which people's use of media changes – the shift from being just a consumer to being a more active participant and creator; and it also gives readers quite a bit of handy detail about how that works at the moment, and what people are saying about it. Then it also provides some useful tools and perspectives for thinking about these changes and why we really need them. And in particular, hopefully it will give educators things to discuss with their students, and things for the students to discuss between themselves. You don't even need to agree with it!

I thought it was important to make the case for a positive and optimistic way in which things *could* develop, if only we as social actors would push for that. In critical media theory you typically just get scholars explaining the negative side of everything – which, in this area, tends to be the concerns about surveillance and privacy online, and the unpredictability of commercial platforms – and how it will probably get worse. Those are valuable warnings, but I think you also need constructive suggestions. I'm saying, 'OK, I can see how the Web can be exploited in a *bad* way, but let's consider what would be a *good* way to use it' — and giving an answer.

Dave Trotman: Looking at the book from the perspective of creativity research and literature, I think *Making is Connecting* offers a very human response to the 'contemporary condition', and one which, for the most part, I am actually sympathetic to. Indeed, chapter seven, 'Tools for Change' (which connects Ivan Illich with the web 2.0 environment) encapsulated some of the shared sentiment – and I enjoyed reading this chapter perhaps more than any other. The patchwork of eclectic references also provide an interesting 'weave' of material that for me, attempts to connect (and I guess this might be the subtext) some intriguing perspectives – which will be of interest to the intended audience.

Regarding the focus on creativity, this is principally framed by one study – that of

Csikszentmihalyi, which sits in a long tradition of North American research – mostly from the field of cognitive and social psychology – and this is absent from the discussion. Claxton's work (which I think offers a better account of creativity than Csikszentmihalyi's) is also situated within this tradition. But there are other important counterpoints/responses to this from the field of Critical Theory and Sociology (e.g. Willis's *Common Culture* and the grounded aesthetic, and Woods and Jeffrey's ethnographic studies of creativity in schools), so I think this presents a particular definition and description of creativity to the uninitiated reader. There can be 'cultural blindspots' in creativity research that Anna Craft has reported. This has a particular bearing on how different ethnic, faith and cultural groups may perceive creative practice, e.g. as a matter of community endeavour over individual enterprise; or a spiritual experience over material encounter. This aspect seems to me to be entirely relevant to the overall project of the book as well as offering a necessary multi-perspectival view of creativity. Also, the significance of imagination in the project is another phenomenon that has been the subject of intensive research (see Eisner, Egan et al) – and as a critical precursor to creative work. Following Csikszentmihalyi, there is an assumption that creativity is, or has to be, a matter of public expression, and that community is a necessary part of this. Whilst I don't necessary disagree that this is a good thing, much of the creative domain can be intensely personal, private and solitary (see Storr's thinking on this for example) – creating is disconnecting? Finally, the problem of creativity as a 'good thing' - weapons of torture, terrorism, human trafficking etc all require levels of ingenuity, innovation and problem solving in creative form.

Mark Readman: I also found myself slightly conflicted when reading David's book; I found the rhetoric regarding activities which can improve one's life to be seductive, but I agree that the use of Csikszentmihalyi's as the 'dominant' model of creativity is rather skewed, especially given Paul Willis' democratic celebration of 'common culture' and the inevitably creative nature of young people's lives.

DG: Okay, well, these comments concern only a few pages of the book, in which I discuss Csikszentmihalyi's definition of creativity, and then set out an alternative – and in doing so, implicitly accept several of the points here. The observations imply that I am taking Csikszentmihalyi's model as a superior one, but that is very clearly not the case. On the contrary, I highlight weaknesses with that model and suggest a very different alternative.

I did not set out to present a comprehensive literature review of 'creativity' definitions or approaches. Several publications exist which do that already, and I refer to some of them in the book, but that wasn't the point here. I single out Csikszentmihalyi's definition

because it appears so often in discussions of 'creativity'. I've got lots of books with 'creativity' in the title on my shelves, and most of them wheel out Csikszentmihalyi at the start, and tend to follow in his footsteps. I even make reference to a meta-analysis of 'creativity' definitions in the literature, which basically found that they almost all congregated around the Csikszentmihalyi approach. We might all like Paul Willis, but he doesn't get a look in there.

That is indeed due to the dominance of a particular, mostly North American kind of approach, and one which has cultural blindspots – that's why I wanted to suggest an alternative! The Storr point is a good one, but this is a book about the social dimensions of creativity, so that wasn't a primary concern here. The point of the book was not to show off about all the stuff I've read, or to overwhelm the reader with multiple layers of literature review.

Finally, there is the point that creativity is not always 'good', and can have nasty applications. First of all, this is acknowledged in the book anyway. But more importantly, in general terms, do we want a population which is more creative and interested in flexing their creative muscles as part of everyday activity, or do you want them to be passive and unimaginative? Of course, we want the former. Well, I do. And so you have to take creativity as a general good, and encourage it, even if people could be creative in horrible ways, just as they can do almost anything in horrible ways. Otherwise it's like saying that literacy is not necessarily a good thing because some people might read terrorist handbooks.

MR: It's perhaps ironic, given David's earlier work, that the definition of creativity he proposes in this book is so non-sociological, but one which depends upon an essentialist notion of human nature and something which reaches for transcendence.

DG: Ah — I'm afraid that in academic circles, calling someone 'essentialist' is a way to shoot someone down without really having to explain yourself, isn't it? David Buckingham did it too in his recent criticisms of my research methods work. I was surprised by that attack, not least because it didn't make any sense, and seemed to involve deliberately misunderstanding what I'd said.

But let's look at this 'essentialist' claim. An essentialist view would be that 'human nature', whatever that is, is fixed and not the result of cultural conditions. Obviously I don't think that. (My *Media, Gender and Identity* devotes most of its pages to arguing the exact opposite). In the new book I do say that generally people benefit from human relationships and connections, from having a project to work on, from being engaged in a creative

activity. But that was the starting point which then I had to flesh out with lots of evidence. There's a whole chapter on the empirical research by economists and social scientists into human happiness, and another chapter on the 'social capital' research, all based on lots of hard data. So I do say that here are some supportable generalisations we can make about what tends to be good for people, and for society. If we can't do that without people making the dismissive comment about essentialism – which implies you haven't read enough cultural studies books, and must be secretly right wing – then we're all in trouble.

MR: I'm also always resistant to definitions of 'creativity': I can't accept it as a 'thing', but rather a concept that is always mobilised more or less convincingly according to particular sets of interests. So I would be critical of any definition, because definitions tend to name and fix things in order to make them instrumental or operational. And I think the aim in this book could be viewed as an instrumental one; 'creativity' is liberated from the clutches of psychologists in order to allow quotidian practitioners to possess it and maybe, therefore, it is put to work here as a 'functional myth'. What I mean by this is that people may construct their 'creative' efforts as worthwhile if they can attribute 'creativity' to themselves and may be motivated to do more of this.

DG: Well, that's not how I would have put it, but seems okay.

DT: I guess I am less concerned about a definition of creativity but rather a fuller and more informed account of the complexity of the field (disciplinary colonisation, sites of contest etc). The book has something very useful to offer at a genuinely practical level; for the You Tube producers, for the collective of sound engineers and composers, and the guerrilla dance groups etc who may think that the products of their labour are something other than creative in terms of public/conventional/ Csikszentmihalyi's criteria. So maybe some more examples of grass roots practice/commentaries by the 'creatives' might have helped consolidate its position as a guide to self-help and community collaboration…?

MR: That's a good point – it might have done.

DG: Well, in the first chapter (which is free online at www.makingisconnecting.org – so readers of this discussion can judge for themselves), I make it clear that the book does not intend to be a series of case studies – which exist elsewhere, and which I point to – but is more of an attempt to pull together a set of different ideas, arguments, and research findings in order to make a new argument.

The subtext when I wrote that explanation was that it deliberately wasn't meant to be a Malcolm Gladwell-style wander through some fascinating cases and anecdotes. Gladwell is a brilliantly clear and clever writer, but I had no illusions of competing with him.

JMcD: In the book, you describe a shift from a passive to a more active culture (from 'sit back and be told' to 'making and doing') and talk about Illich and 'deschooling' in this context. McLuhan is also, by others, reinvoked as having prophesised web 2.0 (although you discuss him more in terms of television being part of 'sit back' – there's a link to Postman here which, again, I would argue with as I think television reception is more active than this suggests) and you use a communal allotment metaphor to describe how web 2.0 facilitates the kind of participation and exchange that Berners Lee thought the internet would foster. Can you say a bit about your writing on 'convivial tools' – I think you have managed to avoid the technological determinism some of us are routinely accused of – so can you expand on how you did so?

DG: 'Technological determinism' is a charge which is often levelled at people who are merely seeking to discuss ways in which technology *could* be used. It's laughable, sometimes – and quite intolerable – how an argument which merely dares to suggest a positive rather than negative application of social media is instantly branded as 'technological determinism'. You could say it's part of an academic sickness, that to be seen as 'cool' and 'critical' you can only subscribe to the most negative diagnoses of everything. As I said before, we do need the warnings about the ways that capitalist businesses will try to exploit web 2.0 platforms and their users – I genuinely care about that too – but to only offer damning criticisms, and nothing positive, seems to be surprisingly unhelpful, since these technologies are already here.

The idea of 'convivial tools' comes from Ivan Illich. It describes those tools which a person can use to make their own meanings, to express themselves, and to shape their environment so that it embodies their own orientations, meanings and preferences. At the opposite end of the scale are 'industrial tools', which only allow you to fit within their predetermined mould. You can use this notion to evaluate technologies by asking, 'Does it help you to do *your* thing, or does it want you to do *its* thing?'. In media terms, a platform like You Tube is more of a convivial tool, I would say, whilst television is more of an industrial tool. That doesn't mean that You Tube is the answer to all of society's problems, or that TV is evil, but it's a fruitful way of thinking about them as types of tools. It's especially helpful in more subtle cases. For example we did a study of the BBC's virtual world for children, *Adventure Rock*, which the BBC promoted as being wonderfully

'interactive' and 'creative'. But if you ask, 'Does it help you to do *your* thing, or does it want you to do *its* thing?', well *Adventure Rock* only really wanted you to do *its* thing. Then that gives you a starting point for a more detailed critique.

JMcD: When people talk about 'digital media', with regard to creativity, literacy, participation or identity, things get lumped together and generalised, but in your book you carefully distinguish – for example, between the 'ambient intimacy' of Twitter or Flickr, and the way that Second Life restricts immediacy through the imposition of the avatar – but is there a case for seeing identity-play in virtual worlds as a way of being creative and collaborative and maybe that designing an avatar to 'stand in' for yourself might be liberating precisely because it isn't so immediate?

DG: Well perhaps. I have to admit I have a bit of a blind spot here. Maybe there will be virtual worlds in the future which will be valuable tools. But, as it records in the book, I felt rather anxious in the mid-2000s when people were saying that Second Life was the way that all online life was going to go. Because it's a rather clunky way of communicating and connecting, in my personal experience. The avatar gets in the way; the whole setup is not that expressive; it looks a bit naff. I secretly wished it wouldn't catch on because I didn't like the feel of it. And indeed, now we can see that basically it hasn't become the new home of everything online, and my students dislike it more than I do. I guess I like online tools where people can make their mark and communicate their meanings on their own terms, not by having to process it through someone else's idea of the world.

JMcD: Coming at this in relation to the debates over 'Media Studies 2.0', which we'll explore in the next, themed issue of *MERJ*, I was very interested in the section on critics of web 2.0, and the discussion around ownership and control, and particularly how the big corporations have managed not to 'ruin' the platforms they offer – to what extent is this about the politics of ownership and access, as opposed to functionality and design – or is it both?

DG: It's to do with both, isn't it, in that you need a well-designed platform, and then you need to run it carefully. But the point is that You Tube, say, is currently a usable and engaging platform that, *to date*, has not been totally ruined with excessive adverts or other unwelcome corporate interventions. But I also talk about how it doesn't make any money, and the emphasis is on how such platforms have not been spoiled *so far*.

I don't like the way that the web 2.0 model typically requires us to hand over our creative products to commercial companies in order to get them easily and widely shared. Indeed, I have suggested that you might expect that one of our national public institutions – or an international consortium of them – might reasonably be expected to develop a non-commercial alternative. There's no reason why this would not be a serious suggestion. If you want to foster creativity in society – and with all the challenges that we face, who wouldn't want to do that – then it would be a very sensible and *relatively* inexpensive thing to do. To put it in perspective: the cost of running You Tube is less than eight per cent of the cost of running the BBC.

However, nobody takes this seriously. For example I was at a British Library event, and the British Library has a project to archive all of the UK's webpages. This is an eye-wateringly massive project, which would be incredibly expensive to do properly, and one which arguably rather misses the point of the Web. What if, I suggested, they put all that money into supporting a platform for *new* creativity, rather than archiving already-existing things? The assembled academics and librarians only laughed politely. But a properly supported, non-commercial web 2.0 platform would be a wonderful thing to help foster the creative capacity of the population in a sustainable way, and would be exempt from all the criticisms that the supposedly 'political' critics make of Web 2.0 platforms today. It's not going to happen any time soon, though.

MR: If we can discuss the book's style, I was aware of a strong flavour of anti-intellectualism or, at least, anti-academicism in the book and I wonder if this is part of a strategy to resist the kind of reading that Dave and I have been imposing on it. Who is the audience for this book?

DT: I was also left wondering as to just exactly who the text is aimed at. At one level its 'register' reminded me very much of a Gladwell's 'Tipping Point' and Goleman's 'Emotional Intelligence' – the former, an unabashed piece of journalism and the latter considered to be the same by some of Goleman's harsher critics. So I wasn't clear whether this was indeed an anti-intellectual thesis, or selective synthesis for the layperson.

DG: Well, the book is for anyone who wants to read it. I strongly disagree with the idea that the book is anti-intellectual – it's full of enthusiastic discussion of intellectual people and ideas. I can say that without even needing to make any claims about my own cognitive abilities. You could say, perhaps, that it is anti-*pretentious*, in that I sometimes make fun of needlessly pompous people and arguments, but I don't think that's a major theme. And as

for the suggestion that there is necessarily an inverse relationship between readability and quality – well, I didn't think that intelligent people believe that that's true any more. As for Gladwell, see my earlier comment.

MR: I also noticed that the book has a tendency to elide potentially contradictory elements; 'craft' and 'creativity' for example which, in other contexts, are set against each other. I think *Making is Connecting* yokes together a whole range of things and argues that, essentially, they all have something in common – it's promiscuous in its embrace of products and ideas in the service of the thesis that 'making is connecting'. Having said that, I'm not immune to the rhetoric – promiscuity can be seductive sometimes! One would have to be a curmudgeon to argue against the proposition that we need to explore things to make our experience of life more pleasurable, to attempt to connect with other people in more meaningful ways and to attempt to fulfil our potential. Emotionally, then, I'm on board.

In addition, the book seems to fit into a wider project to increase public understanding of ideas (David's You Tube videos constitute an aspect of this work). The populism I referred to earlier makes me think that perhaps I've subjected the book to a reading which is not invited; it actually works very well for a non-specialist, non-academic audience and makes inventive and engaging connections between a range of thinkers and practices. Furthermore, it's an artfully constructed piece of work with a persuasive tone – the use of Illich is particularly cogent, and it's a neat device to delay the references to Illich's notion of 'joy' in order to set up an echo of the 'new definition' of creativity earlier in the book. I enjoyed reading it and, at times, was even inspired to join in, and believe that I could be enriched by practising some kind of 'creative' activity!

DT: Despite some of the issues we have drawn out, I'm clear about the positive contribution the book has to make. I would also find it difficult to argue against the valuable triangulation of making, creativity and well-being that is achieved in *Making is Connecting*.

JMcD: My own view of *Making is Connecting* is that it's a timely and very well constructed, readable and optimistic contribution to a hitherto confused and clumsily articulated area – the value of creativity for media education. But I can see how being bold enough to offer that will inevitably be controversial, as is illustrated by our two reviewers. And I don't agree with all of it myself – see my earlier comments about television and Second Life - which I think is too briefly discussed and dismissed – and also I'd like to have seen a discussion of the relationship between creative participation, cultural capital and social class – an

important theme in the editorial exchange in this issue.

Crucially, though, the book is not just an abstracted theory but is informed by research, so we should resist any binary opposition between engaging books like this and academic research, because *Making is Connecting* offers both. The general theory the book offers is presented with optimism and passion. But at the same time I still believe in the value of peer reviewed academic research into pedagogy, and I would be anxious about dispensing with it. We need lively, engaging books like *Making is Connecting* and also peer review – or do we?

DG: Well, a book gets reviewed by lots of people, both before and especially after publication. It gets reviewed many more times than an academic paper does. I don't suppose we want to get into a big debate about 'peer reviewed' academic journal articles here, but it seems a relatively ineffective and somewhat phony or random way of guaranteeing quality. I mean, it's a form of filter, for sure, but not necessarily the best one, and does it guarantee quality? We all know it doesn't.

I never understand why the publishing of academic papers could not entirely be put over to a 'publish, then filter' model, where everything is published online and is then *subsequently* rated for quality. Journal publishers argue that they are essential and irreplaceable gatekeepers of quality. But that's not true. Academic authors would not want to humiliate themselves, so would only publish items online when they thought that they were satisfactory. After that moment, formalised online rating systems as well as the everyday more informal transactions that have become familiar – people sharing links to articles that they like, with their peers – would take over to sort the good stuff from the bad, as well as making it all freely accessible.

I'm not arguing, of course, for the closure of your lovely *MERJ*! But if, in due course, MERJ became a respected online portal that hosted links to the best stuff on media education, from anywhere in the world, freely available, and annotated with reviews from people who had liked, or disliked, or had questions about the material … that wouldn't be a *bad* outcome, I don't think.

In conclusion (Julian McDougall):

This issue of *MERJ* has featured a great deal of discussion about some big ideas for media education, in our opening editorial exchange and this one. In both cases, there are arguments about the detail and some critique of academic foundations but broad agreement on the failure of contemporary formal education to respond to what's going on outside of the institution, 'Beyond Technology, as Buckingham puts it. It's not often we

talk about 'happiness' in education – James Paul Gee writes about 'passion communities' and there are connections between the future vision of education in this book, Gee's observations and some of Michael Wesch's methods for transgressing student experience – but we talk a lot about *engagement* and *Making is Connecting* is explicitly looking at this.

These ideas also profilerate in the emerging *Media Education Manifesto*, to which David Gauntlett, Mark Readman and all of our editorial participants have contributed (at http://www.manifestoformediaeducation.co.uk). Wherever you stand on definitions and influences and the question of where you start out from, *Making is Connecting* is essential reading for media educators. Gauntlett takes us beyond instrumental notions of assessing creative practice or teaching with new media into a more far-reaching and political view of how human beings are finding new ways of making their mark on the world, contributing to culture and 'doing it for ourselves'. In a period where 'experts' are bombarding us with moral panics about 'screen addiction' and 'toxic childhood', usually without any research evidence or attention to the fields of existing literature, *Making is Connecting* redresses the balance and gives voice to the creative communities, on and offline, too often spoken *about* from positions of ignorance and suspicion.

Reviewers – Mark Readman and Dave Trotman
Respondent / author – David Gauntlett
Chair / editor – Julian McDougall